SERGEANT YORK AND HIS PEOPLE

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BY

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To

FLOY PASCAL COWAN

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, WITH A LOVE THAT WANES NOT,
BUT GROWS AS THE YEARS ROLL ON

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SERGEANT ALVIN C. YORK

FROM a cabin back in the mountains of Tennessee, forty-eight miles from the railroad, a young man went to the World War. He was untutored in the ways of the world.

Caught by the enemy in the cove of a hill in the Forest of Argonne, he did not run; but sank into the bushes and single-handed fought a battalion of German machine gunners until he made them come down that hill to him with their hands in air. There were one hundred and thirty-two of them left, and he marched them, prisoners, into the American line.

Marshal Foch, in decorating him, said, "What you did was the greatest thing accomplished by any private soldier of all of the armies of Europe."

His ancestors were cane-cutters and In-

dian fighters. Their lives were rich in the romance of adventure. They were men of strong hate and gentle love. His people have lived in the simplicity of the pioneer.

This is not a war-story, but the tale of the making of a man. His ancestors were able to leave him but one legacy—an idea of American manhood.

In the period that has elapsed since he came down from the mountains he has done three things—and any one of them would have marked him for distinction.

SAM K. COWAN.

I

A FIGHT IN THE FOREST OF THE ARGONNE

I

A Fight in the Forest of the Argonne

JUST to the north of Châtel Chéhéry, in the Argonne Forest in France, is a hill which was known to the American soldiers as "Hill No. 223." Fronting its high wooded knoll, on the way to Germany, are three more hills. The one in the center is rugged. Those to the right and left are more sloping, and the one to the left—which the people of France have named "York's Hill"—turns a shoulder toward Hill No. 223. The valley which they form is only from two to three hundred yards wide.

Early in the morning of the eighth of October, 1918, as a floating gray mist relaxed its last hold on the tops of the trees

on the sides of those hills, the "All America" Division—the Eighty-Second—poured over the crest of No. 223. Prussian Guards were on the ridge-tops across the valley, and behind the Germans ran the Decauville Railroad—the artery for supplies to a salient still further to the north which the Germans were striving desperately to hold. The second phase of the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne was on.

As the fog rose the Americans "jumped off" down the wooded slope and the Germans opened fire from three directions. With artillery they pounded the hillside. Machine guns savagely sprayed the trees under which the Americans were moving. At one point, where the hill makes a steep descent, the American line seemed to fade away as it attempted to pass.

This slope, it was found, was being swept by machine guns on the crest of the hill to

the left which faced down the valley. The Germans were hastily "planting" other machine guns there.

The Americans showered that hilltop with bullets, but the Germans were entrenched.

The sun had now melted the mist and the sky was cloudless. From the pits the Germans could see the Americans working their way through the timber.

To find a place from which the Boche could be knocked away from those death-dealing machine guns and to stop the digging of "fox holes" for new nests, a non-commissioned officer and sixteen men went out from the American line. All of them were expert rifle shots who came from the support platoon of the assault troops on the left.

Using the forest's undergrowth to shield them, they passed unharmed through the

bullet-swept belt which the Germans were throwing around Hill No. 223, and reached the valley. Above them was a canopy of lead. To the north they heard the heavy cannonading of that part of the battle.

When they passed into the valley they found they were within the range of another battalion of German machine guns. The Germans on the hill at the far end of the valley were lashing the base of No. 223.

For their own protection against the bullets that came with the whip of a wasp through the tree-tops, the detachment went boldly up the enemy's hill before them.

On the hillside they came to an old trench, which had been used in an earlier battle of the war. They dropped into it.

Moving cautiously, stopping to get their bearings from the sounds of the guns above them, they walked the trench in Indian file. It led to the left, around the shoulder of

the hill, and into the deep dip of a valley in the rear.

Germans were on the hilltop across that valley. But the daring of the Americans protected them. The Germans were guarding the valleys and the passes and they were not looking for enemy in the shadow of the barrels of German guns.

As the trench now led down the hill, carrying the Americans away from the gunners they sought, the detachment came out of it and took skirmish formation in the dense and tangled bushes.

They had gone but a short distance when they stepped upon a forest path. Just below them were two Germans, with Red Cross bands upon their arms. At the sight of the Americans, the Germans dropped their stretcher, turned and fled around a curve.

The sound of the shots fired after them

was lost in the clatter of the machine guns above. One of the Germans fell, but regained his feet, and both disappeared in the shrubs to the right.

It was kill or capture those Germans to prevent exposure of the position of the invaders, and the Americans went after them.

They turned off the path where they saw the stretcher-bearers leave it, darted through the underbrush, dodged trees and stumps and brushes. Jumping through the shrubs and reeds on the bank of a small stream, the Americans in the lead landed in a group of about twenty of the enemy.

The Germans sprang to their feet in surprize. They were behind their own line of battle. Officers were holding a conference with a major. Private soldiers, in groups, were chatting and eating. They were before a little shack that was the German major's headquarters, and from it stretched

telephone wires. The Germans were not set for a fight.

Out from the brushwood and off the bank across the stream, one after another, came the Americans.

It bewildered the Germans. They did not know the number of the enemy that had come upon them. As each of the "Buddies" landed, he sensed the situation, and prepared for an attack from any angle. Some of them fired at German soldiers whom they saw reaching for their guns.

All threw up their hands, with the cry "Kamerad!" when the Americans opened fire.

About their prisoners the Americans formed in a semicircle as they forced them to disarm. At the left end of this crescent was Alvin York—a young six-foot mountaineer, who had come to the war from "The Knobs of Tennessee." He knew nothing of

military tactics beyond the simple evolutions of the drill. Only a few days before had he first seen the flash of a hostile gun. But a rifle was as familiar to his hands as one of the fingers upon them. His body was ridged and laced with muscles that had grown to seasoned sinews from swinging a sledge in a blacksmith-shop. He had never seen the man or crowd of men of whom he was afraid. He had hunted in the mountains while forked lightning flashed around him. He had heard the thunder crash in mountain coves as loud as the burst of any German shell. He was of that type into whose brain and heart the qualm of fear never comes.

The Americans were on the downstep of the hill with their prisoners on the higher ground. The major's headquarters had been hidden away in a thicket of young undergrowth, and the Americans could see but a short distance ahead.

As the semicircle formed with Alvin York on the left end, he stepped beyond the edge of the thicket—and what he saw up the hill surprized him.

Just forty yards away was the crest, and along it was a row of machine guns—a battalion of them!

The German gunners had heard the shots fired by the Americans in front of the major's shack, or they had been warned by the fleeing stretcher-bearers that the enemy was behind them. They were jerking at their guns, rapidly turning them around, for the nests had been masked and the muzzles of the guns pointed down into the valley at the foot of Hill No. 223, to sweep it when the Eighty-Second Division came out into the open.

Some of the Germans in the gun-pits, using rifles, shot at York. The bullets "burned his face as they passed." He cried

a warning to his comrades which evidently was not heard, for when he began to shoot up the hill they called to him to stop as the Germans had surrendered. They saw—only the prisoners before them.

There was no time for parley. York's second cry, "Look out!" could carry no explanation of the danger to those whose view was blinded by the thicket. The Germans had their guns turned. Hell and death were being belched down the hillside upon the Americans.

At the opening rattle of these guns the German prisoners as if through a prearranged signal, fell flat to the ground, and the streams of lead passed over them. Some of the Americans prevented by the thicket from seeing that an attack was to be made upon them, hearing the guns, instinctively followed the lead of the Germans. But

the onslaught came with such suddenness that those in the line of fire had no chance.

The first sweep of the guns killed six and wounded three of the Americans. Death leaped through the bushes and claimed Corporal Murray Savage, Privates Maryan Dymowski, Ralph Weiler, Fred Wareing, William Wine and Carl Swanson. Crumpled to the ground, wounded, were Sergeant Bernard Early, who had been in command; Corporal William B. Cutting and Private Mario Muzzi.

York, to escape the guns he saw sweeping toward him, had dived to the ground between two shrubs.

The fire of other machine guns was added to those already in action and streams of lead continued to pour through the thicket. But the toll of the dead and wounded of the Americans had been taken.

The Germans kept their line of fire about

waist-high so they would not kill their own men, some of whom they could see groveling on the ground.

York had seen the murder of his pals in the first onset. He had heard some one say, "Let's get out of here; we are in the German line!" Then all had been silence on the American side.

German prisoners lay on the ground before him, in view of the gunners on the hilltop. York edged around until he had a clear view of the gun-pits above him. The stalks of weeds and undergrowth were about him.

There came a lull in the machine gun fire. Several Germans arose as though to come out of their pits and down the hill to see the battle's result.

But on the American side the battle was just begun. York, from the brushes at the end of the thicket, "let fly."

One of the Germans sprang upward, waved his arms above him as he began his flight into eternity.

The others dropped back into their holes, and there was another clatter of machine guns and again the bullets slashed across the thicket.

But there was silence on the American side. York waited.

More cautiously, German heads began to rise above their pits. York moved his rifle deliberately along the line knocking back those heads that were the more venturesome. The American rifle shoots five times, and a clip was gone before the Germans realized that the fire upon them was coming from one point.

They centered on that point.

Around York the ground was torn up. Mud from the plowing bullets besmirched him. The brush was mowed away above

and on either side of him, and leaves and twigs were falling over him.

But they could only shoot at him. They were given no chance to take deliberate aim. As they turned the clumsy barrel of a machine gun down at the fire-sparking point on the hillside a German would raise his head above his pit to sight it. Instantly backward along that German machine gun barrel would come an American bullet—crashing into the head of the Boche who manned the gun.

The prisoners on the ground squirmed under the fire that was passing over them. Their bodies were in a tortuous motion. But York held them there; it made the gunners keep their fire high.

Every shot York made was carefully placed. As a hunter stops in the forest and gazes straight ahead, his mind, receptive to the slightest movement of a squirrel or the

rustle of leaves in any of the trees before him, so this Tennessee mountaineer faced and fought that line of blazing machine guns on the ridge of the hill before him. His mind was sensitive to the point in the line that at that instant threatened a real danger, and instinctively he turned to it.

Down the row of prisoners on the ground he saw the German major with a pistol in his hand, and he made the officer throw the gun to him. Later its magazine was found to have been emptied.

He noted that after he shot at a gun-pit, there was a break in the line of flame at that point, and an interval would pass before that gun would again be manned and become a source of danger to him. He also realized that where there was a sudden break of ten or fifteen feet in the line of flame, and the trunk of a tree rose within that space, that soon a German gun and helmet would

come peeking around the tree's trunk. A rifleman would try for him where the machine guns failed.

In the mountains of Tennessee Alvin York had won fame as one of the best shots with both rifle and revolver that those mountains had ever held, and his imperturbability was as noted as the keenness of his sight.

In mountain shooting-matches at a range of forty yards—just the distance the row of German guns were from him—he would put ten rifle bullets into a space no larger than a man's thumb-nail. Since a small boy he had been shooting with a rifle at the bobbing heads of turkeys that had been tethered behind a log so that only their heads would show. German heads and German helmets loomed large before him.

A battalion of machine guns is a military unit organized to give battle to a regiment of infantry. Yet, one man, a representative

of America on that hillside on that October morning, broke the morale of a battalion of machine gunners made up from members of Germany's famous Prussian Guards. Down in the brush below the Prussians was a human machine gun they could not hit, and the penalty was death to try to locate him.

As York fought, there was prayer upon his lips. He was an elder in a little church back in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" in the mountains of Tennessee. He prayed to God to spare him and to have mercy on those he was compelled to kill.

When York shot, and a German soldier fell backward or pitched forward and remained motionless, York would call to them:

"Well! Come on down!"

It was an earnest command in which there was no spirit of exultation or braggadocio.

He was praying for their surrender, so that he might stop killing them.

His command, "Come down!" at times, above the firing, was heard in the German pits. They realized they were fighting one man, and could not understand the strange demand.

When the fight began York was lying on the ground. But as the entire line of German guns came into the fight, he raised himself to a sitting position so that his gun would have the sweep of all of them.

When the Germans found they could not "get him" with bullets, they tried other tactics.

Off to his left, seven Germans, led by a lieutenant, crept through the bushes. When about twenty yards away, they broke for him with lowered bayonets.

The clip of York's rifle was nearly empty. He dropped it and took his automatic pistol.

So calmly was he master of himself and so complete his vision of the situation that he selected as his first mark among the oncoming Germans the one farthest away. He knew he would not miss the form of a man at that distance. He wanted the rear men to fall first so the others would keep coming at him and not stop in panic when they saw their companions falling, and fire a volley at him. He felt that in such a volley his only danger lay. They kept coming, and fell as he shot. The foremost man, and the last to topple, did not get ten yards from where he started. Their bodies formed a line down the hillside.

York resumed the battle with the machine guns. The German fire had "eased up" while the bayonet charge was on. The gunners paused to watch the grim struggle below them.

The major, from among the prisoners,

crawled to York with an offer to order the surrender of the machine gunners.

"Do it!" was his laconic acceptance. But his vigilance did not lessen.

To the right a German had crawled near-by. He arose and hurled a hand-grenade. It missed its objective and wounded one of the prisoners. The American rifle swung quickly and the grenade-thrower pitched forward with the grunt of a man struck heavily in the stomach pit.

The German major blew his whistle.

Out of their gun-pits the Germans came —around from behind trees—up from the brush on either side. They were unbuckling cartridge belts and throwing them and their side-arms away.

York did not move from his position in the brush. About halfway down the hill as they came to him, he halted them, and he watched the gun-pits for the movement of

any one left skulking there. His eye went cautiously over the new prisoners to see that all side-arms had been thrown away.

The surrender was genuine.

There were about ninety Germans before him with their hands in air. This gave him over a hundred prisoners.

He arose and called to his comrades, and several answered him. Some of the responses came from wounded men.

All of the Americans had been on York's right throughout the fight. The thicket had prevented them from taking any effective part. They were forced to protect themselves from the whining bullets that came through the brush from unseen guns. They had constantly guarded the prisoners and shielded York from treachery.

Seven Americans—Percy Beardsley, Joe Konotski, Thomas G. Johnson, Feodor Sak, Michael A. Sacina, Patrick Donahue and

George W. Wills—came to him. Sergeant Early, Corporal Cutting and Private Muzzi, tho wounded, were still alive.

He lined the prisoners up "by twos."

His own wounded he put at the rear of the column, and forced the Germans to carry those who could not walk. The other Americans he stationed along the column to hold the prisoners in line.

Sergeant Early, shot through the body, was too severely wounded to continue in command. York was a corporal, but there was no question of rank for all turned to him for instructions. The Germans could not take their eyes off of him, and instantly complied with all his orders, given through the major, who spoke English.

Stray bullets kept plugging through the branches of the trees around them. For the first time the Americans realized they were under fire from the Germans on the hill

back of them, whom they had seen when they came out of the deserted trench. The Germans stationed there could not visualize the strange fight that was taking place behind a line of German machine guns, and they were withholding their fire to protect their own men. They were plugging into the woods with rifles, hoping to draw a return volley, and thus establish the American's position.

To all who doubted the possibility of carrying so many prisoners through the forest, or spoke of reprisal attacks to release them, York's reply was:

"Let's get 'em out of here!"

The German major looking down the long line of Germans, possibly planning some recoup from the shame and ignominy of the surrender of so many of them, stepped up to York and asked:

"How many men have you got?"

The big mountaineer wheeled on him:

"I got a-plenty!"

And the major seemed convinced that the number of the Americans was immaterial as York thrust his automatic into the major's face and stepped him up to the head of the column.

Among the captives were three officers.

These York placed around him to lead the prisoners—one on either side and the major immediately before him. In York's right hand swung the automatic pistol, with which he had made an impressive demonstration in the fight up the hill. The officers were told that at the first sign of treachery, or for a failure of the men behind to obey a command, the penalty would be their lives; and the major was informed that he would be the first to go.

With this formation no German skulking on the hill or in the bushes could fire upon York without endangering the officers. Sim-

ilar protection was given all of the Americans acting as escort.

Up the hill York started the column. From the topography of the land he knew there were machine guns over the crest that had had no part in the fight.

Straight to these nests he marched them. As the column approached, the major was forced by York to command the gunners to surrender.

Only one shot was fired after the march began. At one of the nests, a German, seeing so many Germans as prisoners and so few of the enemy to guard them—all of them on the German firing-line with machine gun nests around them—refused to throw down his gun, and showed fight.

York did not hesitate.

The remainder of that gun's crew took their place in line, and the major promised York there would be no more delays in the

surrenders if he would kill no more of them.

As a great serpent the column wound among the trees on the hilltop swallowing the crews of German machine guns.

After the ridge had been cleared, four machine gun-nests were found down the hillside.

It took all the woodcraft the young mountaineer knew to get to his own command. They had come back over the hilltop and were on the slope of the valley in which the Eighty-Second Division was fighting. They were now in danger from both German and American guns.

York listened to the firing, and knew the Americans had reached the valley—and that some of them had crossed it. Where their line was running he could not determine.

He knew if the Americans saw his column

of German uniforms they were in danger—captors and captives alike—of being annihilated. At any moment the Germans from the two hilltops down the valley—to check the Eighty-Second Division's advance—might lay a belt of bullets across the course they traveled.

Winding around the cleared places and keeping in the thickly timbered section of the hillslope whenever it was possible, Sergeant York worked his way toward the American line.

In the dense woods the German major made suggestions of a path to take. As York was undecided which one to choose, the major's suggestion made him go the other one. Frequently the muzzle of York's automatic dimpled the major's back and he quickened his step, slowed up, or led the column in the direction indicated to him, without turning his head and without in-

quiry as to the motive back of York's commands.

Down near the foot of the hill, near the trench they had traveled a short while before, York answered the challenge to "Halt!"

He stepped out so his uniform could be seen, and called to the Americans challenging him, and about to fire on the Germans, that he was "bringing in prisoners."

The American line opened for him to pass, and a wild cheer went up from the Doughboys when they saw the column of prisoners. Some of them "called to him to know" if he had the "whole damned German army."

At the foot of the hill in an old dugout an American P. C. had been located, and York turned in his prisoners.

The prisoners were officially counted by Lieut. Joseph A. Woods, Assistant Division

Inspector, and there were 132 of them, three of the number were officers and one with the rank of major.

When the Eighty-Second Division passed on, officers of York's regiment visited the scene of the fight and they counted 25 Germans that he had killed and 35 machine guns that York had not only silenced but had unmanned, carrying the men back with him as prisoners.

When York was given "his receipt for the prisoners," an incident happened that shows the true knightliness of character of this untrained mountaineer.

It was but a little after ten o'clock in the morning. The Americans had a hard day's fighting ahead of them. Somewhere out in the forest York's own company—Company G—and his own regiment—the 328th Infantry—were fighting. He made inquiry, but no one could direct him to them. He

turned to the nearest American officer, saluted and reported, "Ready for duty."

What he had done was to him but a part of the work to be done that day.

But York was assigned to the command of his prisoners, to carry them back to a detention camp. The officers were held by the P. C.—for an examination and grilling on the plans of the enemy.

Whenever they could the private soldiers among the prisoners gathered close to York, now looking to him for their personal safety.

On the way to the detention camp the column was shelled by German guns from one of the hilltops. York maneuvered them and put them in double quick time until they were out of range.

Late in the afternoon, back of the three hills that face Hill No. 223, the "All America" Division "cut" the Decauville Railroad that supplied a salient to the north that the

Germans were striving desperately to hold. As they swept on to their objective they found the hill to the left of the valley, that turns a shoulder toward No. 223—which the people of France have named "York's Hill"—cleared of Germans, and on its crest, silent and unmanned machine guns.

Americans returned and buried on the hillside—beside a thicket, near a shack that had been the German officer's headquarters —six American soldiers. They placed wooden crosses to mark the graves and on the top of the crosses swung the helmets the soldiers had worn.

Out from the forest came the story of what York had done. The men in the trenches along the entire front were told of it. Not only in the United States, but in Great Britain, France and Italy, it electrified the public. From the meager details the press was able to carry, for the entire

Entente firing-line was ablaze and a surrender was being forced upon Germany, and York's division was out in the Argonne still fighting its way ahead, the people could but wonder how one man was able to silence a battalion of machine guns and bring in so many prisoners.

Major-General George B. Duncan, commander of the Eighty-Second Division, and officers of York's regiment knew that history had been made upon that hillside. By personal visits of the regiment's officers to the scene, by measurements, by official count of the silent guns and the silent dead, by affidavits from those who were with York, the record of his achievement was verified.

Major-General C. P. Summerall, before the officers of York's regiment, said to him:

"Your division commander has reported to me your exceedingly gallant conduct during the operations of your division in the

Meuse-Argonne Battle. I desire to express to you my pleasure and commendation for the courage, skill, and gallantry which you displayed on that occasion. It is an honor to command such soldiers as you. Your conduct reflects great credit not only upon the American army, but upon the American people. Your deeds will be recorded in the history of this great war and they will live as an inspiration not only to your comrades but to the generations that will come after us."

General John J. Pershing in pinning the Congressional Medal of Honor upon him —the highest award for valor the United States Government bestows—called York the greatest civilian soldier of the war.

Marshal Foch, bestowing the Croix de Guerre with Palm upon him, said his feat was the World War's most remarkable individual achievement.

A deed that is done through the natural use of a great talent seems to the doer of the deed the natural thing to have done. A sincere response to appreciation and praise, made by those endowed with real ability, usually comes cloaked in a genuine modesty.

At his home in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf," after the war was over, I asked Alvin York how he came to be "Sergeant York."

"Well," he said, as he looked earnestly at me, "you know we were in the Argonne Forest twenty-eight days, and had some mighty hard fighting in there. A lot of our boys were killed off. Every company has to have so many sergeants. They needed a sergeant; and they jes' took me."

In the summer of 1917 when Alvin York was called to war, he was working on the farm for $25 a month and his midday meal, walking to and from his work. He was

helping to support his widowed mother with her family of eleven. When he returned to this country to be mustered out of service he had traveled among the soldiers of France the guest of the American Expeditionary Force, so the men in the lines could see the man who single-handed had captured a battalion of machine guns, and he bore the emblems of the highest military honors conferred for valor by the governments composing the Allies.

At New York he was taken from the troop-ship when it reached harbor and the spontaneous welcome given him there and at Washington was not surpassed by the prearranged demonstrations for the Nation's distinguished foreign visitors.

The streets of those cities were lined with people to await his coming and police patrols made way for him. The flaming red of his hair, his young, sunburned, weather-

ridged face with its smile and its strength, the worn service cap and uniform, all marked him to the crowds as the man they sought.

On the shoulders of members of the New York Stock Exchange he was carried to the floor of the Exchange and business was suspended. When he appeared in the gallery of the House of Representatives at Washington, the debate was stopped and the members turned to cheer him. A sergeant in rank, he sat at banquets as the guest of honor with the highest officials of the Army and Navy and the Government on either side. Wherever he went he heard the echo of the valuation which Marshal Foch and General Pershing placed upon his deeds.

Many business propositions were made to him. Some were substantial and others strange, the whimsical offerings of enthused admirers.

Among them were cool fortunes he could never earn at labor.

Taking as a basis the money he was paid for three months on the farm in the summer before he went to France, he would have had to work fifty years to earn the amount he was offered for a six-weeks' theatrical engagement. For the rights to the story of his life a single newspaper was willing to give him the equivalent of thirty-three years. He would have to live to be over three hundred years of age to earn at the old farm wage the sum motion picture companies offered, as a guarantee.

He turned all down, and went back to the little worried mother who was waiting for him in a hut in the mountains, to the gazelle-like mountain girl whose blue eyes had haunted the shades of night and the shadows of trees, to the old seventy-five acre farm that clings to one of the sloping sides of a sun-

kissed valley in Tennessee. He refused to capitalize his fame, his achievements that were crowded into a few months in the army of his country.

There was one influence that was ever guiding him. The future had to square to the principles of thought and action he had laid down for himself and that he had followed since he knelt, four years before, at a rough-boarded altar in a little church in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf," whose belfry had been calling, appealing to him since childhood.

Admiral Albert Gleaves, who commanded the warship convoy for the troopships, himself a Tennesseean, made a prediction which came true. "The guns of Argonne and the batteries of welcome of the East were not to be compared to those to be turned loose in York's home state."

The people of Tennessee filled depots,

streets and tabernacles to welcome him. Gifts awaited him, which ranged from a four-hundred acre farm raised by public subscriptions by the Rotary Clubs and newspapers, to blooded stock for it, and almost every form of household furnishings that could add to man's comfort. It took a wareroom at Nashville and the courtesies of the barns of the State Fair Association to hold the gifts.

He was made a Colonel by the Governor of Tennessee, and appointed a member of his staff. He was elected to honorary membership in many organizations. As far away as Spokane the "Red Headed Club" thought him worthy of their membership "by virtue of the color of his hair and in recognition of his services to this, our glorious country."

The nations of Europe for whom he fought had not forgotten nor had they ceased to honor him. After he had returned

to the mountains of Tennessee, another citation came from the French Government for a military award that had been made him, and in a ceremony at the capital of Tennessee the Italian Government conferred upon him the Italian Cross of War.

The "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf," where Alvin York was born and lives, which has been the home of his ancestors for more than a hundred years, is a level fertile valley that is almost a rectangle in form. Three mountains rising on the north and south and west enclose it, while to the east four mountains jumble together, forming the fourth side. It seems that each of these is striving for a place by the valley.

It is down the passes of these mountains on the east that the three branches of the Wolf River run, and it is their meeting and commingling that gave the quaint name to the valley.

The forks of the Wolf rush down the passes, but the river runs lazily through the valley. It flows beside a cornfield, then wanders over to a meadow of clover or into a patch of sugar-cane, turning the while from side to side as the varying mountain vistas come into view. At the far end where it is pushed over the mill dam and out of the valley, the Wolf roars protestingly; then rushes on to the Cumberland River a silver line between the mountains.

Pall Mall, the village, is co-extensive with the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf." As a stranger first sees Pall Mall it is but a half-mile of the mountain roadway that runs from Jamestown, the county seat of Fentress county, to Byrdstown, the county seat of Pickett.

The roadway comes down from the top of "The Knobs," a thousand feet above, and it comes over rocks of high and low degree,

a jolting, impressive journey for its traveler. It reaches the foot of the mountain along one of the prongs of the Wolf, crosses them at the base of the eastern mountains and passes on to the northern side of the river.

At the post office of Pall Mall, which is also the store of "Paster" Pile—a frame building upon stilts to allow an unobstructed flow of the Wolf when on a winter rampage—the road turns at right angles to the west. Through fields of corn it goes, across a stretch of red clover to the clump of forest trees which is the schoolhouse grounds and in which nestles the little church that has played such a prominent part in the life of the village. Then the road goes beside the graveyard and again through corn to the general store of John Marion Rains, which with five houses in sight—and one of these the York home—marks the western confine of Pall Mall.

One can be in the center of Pall Mall and not know it, for the residents live in farm houses that dot the valley and in cabins on the mountainsides. The little church, which sits by the road with no homes near it, is the geographical as well as the religious center of the community—it is the heart of Pall Mall.

Passing the Rains store the roadway tumbles down to the York's big spring. A brook in volume the stream flows clear and cool from a low rock-ribbed cave in the base of the mountain.

Across the spring branch, up the mountainside in a clump of honey-suckle and roses and apple trees is the home to which Sergeant York returned.

It is a two-room cabin. The boxing is of rough boards as are the unplaned narrow strips of batting covering the cracks. There is a chimney at one end and in one room is a

fireplace. The kitchen is a "lean-to" and the only porch is on the rear, the width of the kitchen-dining room. The porch is for service and work, railed partly with a board for a shelf, which holds the water-bucket, the tin wash basin and burdens brought in from the farm.

Parts of the walls of the two rooms are papered with newspapers and catalog pages; the rough rafters run above. The uncovered floor is of wide boards, worn smooth in service, chinked to keep out the blasts of winter.

The porch in the rear is on a level with the mountainside. To care for the mountain's slope a front stoop was built. The sides of it are scantlings and the steps are narrow boards.

The house has been painted by Poverty; but the home is warmed and lit by a mountain mother's love. The front stoop is a

wooden ladder with flat steps but the entrance to the home is an arbor of honeysuckle and roses.

On summer nights the York boys sat on that stoop and sang, and their voices floated on the moonbeams out over the valley. The little mother "pottered" about, with ever a smile on her face for her boys. They were happy.

It was from this home that Alvin went to war, and it was to it he returned.

Visitors know, and it is well for others to realize, that Pall Mall and the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" are back among the rising ranges of the Cumberland Mountains forty-eight miles from the railroad.

Alvin York came from a line of ancestors who were cane-cutters and Indian fighters. The earliest ancestor of whom he has knowledge was a "Long Hunter," who with a rifle

upon his shoulder strode into the Valley of the Wolf and homesteaded the river bottom-lands. Here his people lived far from the traveled paths. Marooned in their mountain fastnesses, they clung to the customs and the traditions of the past. Their life was simple, and their sports quaint. They held shooting-matches on the mountainside, enjoyed "log-rollings" and "corn-huskings." Strong in their loves and in their hates, they feared God, but feared no man. The Civil War swept over the valley and left splotches of blood.

Friends of Sergeant York, knowing that the history of his people was rich in story, and that the public was waiting, wanting to know more of the man the German army could not run, nor make surrender—and instead had to come to him—urged that his story be told.

He had been mustered out of the army

and come back to the valley wanting to pick up again the dropped thread of his former life. He was striving earnestly and prayerfully to blot from recurrent memory that October morning scene on "York's Hill" in France.

His friends and neighbors at Pall Mall waited eagerly for his return. They wanted to hear from his own lips the story of his fight.

No man of the mountains was ever given the home-coming that was his. It was made the reunion of the people, with the neighbors the component parts of one great family.

When home again, Alvin wanted no especial deference shown him. He wished to be again just one of them, to swing himself upon the counter at the general store and talk with them as of old. He had much to tell from his experience, but always it was

of other incidents than the one that made him famous.

Months passed. He lived in that mountain cabin with his little mother, whose counsel has ever influenced him, and yet not once did he mention to her that he had a fight in the Forest of Argonne.

His consent was gained for the publication of the story of his people, but it was with the pronounced stipulation that "it be told right."

Weeks afterward—for I had gone to live awhile among his people—the two of us were sitting upon the rugged rock, facing to the cliff above the York spring, talking about the fight in France.

He told of it hesitatingly, modestly. Some of the parts was simply the confirmation of assembled data; much of it, denial of published rumor and conjecture—before the story came out as a whole.

I asked the meaning of his statement that he would not "mind the publication if the story were done right."

"Well," he said with his mountain drawl, "I don't want you bearing down too much on that killing part. Tell it without so much of that!"

A rock was picked up and hurled down the mountain.

I then understood why the little mother was "jes' a-waiting till Alvin gits ready to talk." I understood why the son did not wish to be the one to bring into his mother's mind the picture of that hour in France when men were falling before his gun. I saw the reason he had for always courteously avoiding talking of the scene with any one.

"But," and he turned with that smile that wins him friends, "I just can't help chuckling at that German major. I sure had him bluffed."

According to the code of mountain conversation there followed a silence. Another rock bounded off the sapling down the cliff.

"You should have seen the major," he resumed, "move on down that hill whenever I pulled down on him with that old Colt. 'Goose-step it', I think they call it. He was so little! His back so straight! And all huffed up over the way he had to mind me."

I had watched the rocks as they went down the cliff and it seemed nearly every one of them bounced off the same limb. I commented on the accuracy of his eye.

"Aw! I wasn't throwing at that sapling, but at—that—leaf."

He straightened up and threw more carefully; and the leaf floated down to the waters of the York spring.

Down by the spring I met the little mother bringing a tin bucket to the stone milk-house which nature had built. Her slender, droop-

ing figure, capped by the sunbonnet she always wore, reached just to the shoulder of her son, as he placed his arm protectingly about her.

I asked if she were not proud of that boy of hers.

"Yes," she answered, with pride in every line of her sweet though wrinkled face, "I am proud of all of them—all of my eight boys!"

II

A "LONG HUNTER" COMES TO THE VALLEY

II

A "Long Hunter" Comes to the Valley

THE "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" is more than a fertile space between two mountain ranges. It is a rectangular basin of verdure and beauty in the glow of a Southern sun, around which seven mountains have grown to their maturity. Generously, for uncounted years, this family of the hills has given to the valley the surplus products of their timbered slopes, and the Wolf River has gone through the valley distributing the wealth the mountains brought in, brightening and adding touches of beauty here and there, ever singing as she came down to her daily task. The mountains and the river have worked unceasingly together to make the spot a place of comfort and beauty.

On the bare rock-shoulder of one of these mountains, in the closing years of the eighteenth century, stood one of the last of the "Long Hunters," that race of stout-hearted, sturdy-legged men who when the Atlantic Coast was dotted with sparsely settled British colonies climbed the mountains and went down the western slopes on the long hunts in the unknown land that lay below. They were the pioneers of the pioneers, who in their wanderings found a spot rich in game, in nuts and soil—such a home as they had wished—and they beckoned back for their families and their friends.

The figure upon the rock-ledge rested upon a long, muzzle-loading, flint-lock rifle as he looked out over the valley. His legs were wrapped in crudely tanned hides made from game he had killed. His cap was of coon-skin. His search for adventure and game had carried him across the crest of the

Cumberlands and along many weary, lonely miles of the western wooded slopes of those mountains. Years afterward he is known to have said that the view from the crag that day was the most appealing in its calmness and its beauty that he had seen upon his hunts.

Below him stretched a grove of trees. Their waving tops told of their size and to his trained woodsman's eye the quivering oval leaves were the leaves of the walnut. It was assurance that the soil was rich. And through the length of the valley, twisted irregularly, lay a wide ribbon of saffron cane, from which at times the silver surface of a stream showed—a further evidence of the soil's fertility. Over the western edge of this tableland of green and yellow and silver the mountains cast a shadow of purple and the sun filtered slanting rays through the forest slopes on the north and east.

Down the mountainside he came, and into the valley; never to leave it, except when in bartering with the Indians he went to their camping-places for furs, or in the years of prosperity that followed he was upon a trading mission.

He first made his way through "Walnut Grove" in search of the caned banks of the river. As he pushed through the reeds that swayed above him he came suddenly upon a well-beaten path. In its dust were the prints of deer-hoofs, and he followed them. The path threaded the length of the valley beside the river's winding course, but he knew from the crests of the mountains above him the direction he was taking.

It led him to the base of one of these mountains, to a spring which flowed clear and cool, a brook in size, from a low rock-ribbed cave.

By the spring he cooked his meal. His

bread was baked upon a hot stone and he drank water from a terrapin shell. As he ate his meal there came the sound of breaking cane, a familiar welcomed vibration to a hunter. A stone, that is still by the spring side, was used as a shelter and a resting-place for the rifle, and a deer fell as it stopped, astonished at the curling smoke that rose from its watering-place.

This was the first meal of the white man at the York spring or in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf," and for more than fifty years the hunter lived within a hundred yards of where he camped that day. He was Conrad Pile—or "Old Coonrod," as he is known, the descriptive adjectives and by-name ever coupled as though one word. He was the great-great-grandfather of Sergeant Alvin Cullom York, and the earliest ancestor of which he has account.

Above the spring in the rock-facing of

the cliff is a large cave. Here Coonrod Pile spread a bed of leaves and made his home. The camp-fire was kept burning and its smoke was seen by other hunters, and Pearson Miller, Arthur Frogge, John Riley and Moses Poor came to Coonrod in the valley, and they too made their homes there, and Pall Mall was founded and descendants of these men are today eighty per cent of the residents in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf."

This is but one of the many valley settlements made by "Long Hunters" in the Appalachian Mountains. Adventurous families in the last days of the Colonies and in the years that came after the Revolution, followed the hunters, and log cabins and "cleared spaces" appeared in the valleys and on the mountainsides. And from them sprang another race of long hunters who went out from the mountains down into the

valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi, returning to tell of the land and the game they had found. Not far from Pall Mall, as the crow would rise and journey, is a carving upon a tree that is believed to historically mark the path of the most noted of the "Long Hunters," and it says:

"D Boon CillED a BAR On Tree in ThE yEAR 1760."

Emigrants of those days settled as Coonrod Pile and his companions took up their "squatter's rights" in the Valley o' the Wolf." As canvas-covered mountain-schooners carrying families of the settlers moved westward they followed the trails of the hunters and stopped where it appealed to them. Wagon-tracks grew into roads as the travel increased. And the roads unvaryingly led to the passes and the gaps in the mountains that offered the least resistance to progress. So scattered throughout the

ranges of the Appalachians are many homes and settlements off from the old, beaten, wagon-trails, far distant from the railroads of to-day, reached only over rocky, rarely-worked roadways.

Those who dwell there are the direct descendants of pioneers. Here they had lived for generations unmolested by the rush and hurry for homes to the more fertile West. Often in those days a mountain neighbor was forty miles away, and they were long rugged miles. To-day a traveler distant on the mountainside can be recognized by the mountaineers while the man's features are still untraceable, by the droop of a hat or a peculiar walk, or amble of the mule he rides. In the case of any traveler along those remote roads the odds are long that the man, his father, his grandfather—as far back as anyone can remember—all were born and raised in the neighborhood, and the neigh-

borhood is the valleys and the cleared spaces on the sides of all the mountains near around.

So the mountaineer of to-day is the transplanted colonist of the eighteenth century; he is the backwoodsman of the days of Andrew Jackson; his life has the hospitality, the genuineness and simplicity of the pioneer. It has been said of the residents of the Cumberland Mountains that they are the purest Anglo-Saxons to be found to-day and not even England can produce so clear a strain.

The mountain families have intermarried and because of the inaccessibility of their homes have remained marooned in their mountain fastnesses. They are Anglo-Saxon in their blood and their customs. They are Colonial-Americans in their speech and credences.

They have a love for daring that comes

from the wildness and freedom of their surroundings. They have a directness of mind that is the result of unconscious training. They must be sure of the firmness of each footstep they take, and it is through and past obstructions that they locate their game. They are keen of observation, for the movement of a shadow or the swaying of a weed may mean the presence of a fox, or a dropping hickory-nut indicate the flight of a squirrel. They are physically brave, for it is the inheritance of all who live in mountains. Their word is accepted, for they wish the good will of the few among whom they must spend their lives; and to them lying is a form of cowardice.

They are sensitive because they are observant and realize they have been criticized and misunderstood—misclassed as a rare race of "moonshiners" and "feudists."

Quickly and clearly they see through any

veneer of democracy the stranger may assume, to conceal an assumption of superiority. Yet for the stranger on the roadside, in answer to the halloo at their gate, the mountaineers are willing to go out of their way to do a favor, and they will cheerfully share such food and comforts as they may have, with any man. But they give their confidence only in proportion to demonstrations of manhood and genuineness, and as humanists they are not in a hurry. If there is an aura of caste, the distinctions must be created by those who have come as strangers into the mountains and not by the mountaineer.

They know they are not ignorant, except as everyone is ignorant who lacks contact with new customs and changes in world progress. They are fully cognizant of their lack of that knowledge which "comes only out of a book." But whatever their educa-

tional shortcomings, no one has ever laid at their door the charge of stupidity.

Raised in nature's school they are masters of its non-elective course. They know by the arc the baying hounds make the size of the circle the fox will take and where to intercept him. They can tell by the distance up the mountain's side where the dogs are running whether the fox is red or gray. They know by the sound a rock makes as it is dropped into the stream the depth of the ford. They have even a classical finish to their woodland schooling and they find a pleasure in noting that the bullfrog sits with his back to the water as the moon rises and faces it as the moon sets.

They know the signs of changing weather that will affect their crops. The tints of the clouds that float above them convey a meaning. There are cause and effect in the wind that continues in one direction. They

watch the actions of wild animals and fowls, and they are wise enough to attribute to beast and bird an intuitive protective sense superior to their own. They note when the moss has grown heavier on the north side of the tree.

The steadiness of their poise and their silence in the presence of strangers is not due to moroseness or the absence of active thought. They have learned in the woods, if they are to be successful in their hunts, to be personally as unobtrusive as possible, often to remain motionless, and all the while to watch and listen alertly. Whenever they can be of real assistance, no one can more quickly or more generously respond.

They have their own standard of values in personal intercourse, and they can wait patiently and in impressive silence. They are always willing for someone else to hold the spotlight on their rural stage.

About themselves they are naturally taciturn, and public and unfriendly criticism has been proved to be a hazardous diversion. If the thought and comment of the stranger upon the mountaineer could be compared with the keen and often humorous analysis of the stranger the score would be found in surprizing frequency on the side of the calm and silent mountaineer.

They give but little heed to the clothes a man wears but look clear-eyed at the man within the clothes. They have no criticism for the way a man says his say, so he has something to say. A noted college professor, himself a mountain boy, maintains:

"I would rather hear a boy say 'I seed' when he had really seen something, than to hear a boy say 'I saw' when he had not seen it."

Old Coonrod Pile lived in the valley until his life spanned from the days when it

was a hunting-ground of the Indians to the time when he can be remembered by some of the men and women now living in Pall Mall, who knew him as the most influential man of his time in the section, the owner of the river-bottom farm land, vast acres of hardwood timber, a general store and a flour mill worked by his slaves—a man grown to such enormous size and weight that in his last days he went about his farm and to oversee his workers in a two-wheeled cart pulled by oxen.

Those of the valley who now remember him were children when he died, for he was born on March 16, 1766, and his death occurred on October 14, 1849.

He saw his valley home changed from a part of the State of Franklin to a part of the State of Kentucky, then to Tennessee, and the abstracts to the deeds for land he owned show that Pall Mall was first in

Granger county, later in Overton and finally in Fentress county as the State of Tennessee developed. Pall Mall is but seven miles from the Kentucky line, and for many years Coonrod thought he had taken up his residence within the Kentucky border.

Settlers of those days in leaving the Carolinas and Virginia traveled usually due west in search for a new home. It was this belief that he had settled in Kentucky that has led many to the opinion that Coonrod's former home was in Virginia. Others, without more definite knowledge for foundation, maintain that as he settled in Tennessee he had lived in North Carolina. The written word was rarely used and the stories of the earlier days in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" are tradition.

In a newly settled territory a man's birthplace and antecedents are facts immaterial to the community's welfare and many inci-

dents historical in nature concerning Old Coonrod have been lost in the waste-basket of forgetfulness and no one now at Pall Mall has "heard tell of jes' where he come from." Yet some readily say that he came from "over yonder," and they point back across the mountains toward North Carolina.

In the first map of Tennessee, made by Daniel Smith, there is a dip in the northern boundary of the state line where Fentress county is located. But this was found to be an error of survey and later corrected. The surveyors of those days were men of courtesy and accommodation, for in the establishment of the Tennessee-Virginia line they surveyed around the southern boundary of the farm of a hospitable host and left his lands in Virginia because the old fellow maintained he had never had any health except in the mountains of Virginia.

That Coonrod was of English descent

there seems scarcely room for doubt, and "Pile," or "Pyle" and "Pall Mall" stand as mute testimony. And "York" too is a component part of old England.

I was never able to learn why the village was given its unique name and there is no tradition that associates it with the noted street in London, though even to-day Pall Mall in Fentress county is but a single road. I asked a white-haired mountaineer how long the place had been known as Pall Mall. With a memory-reviving shake of his head that ended in a convinced nod, his answer was, "quite a-whit."

And that is the nearest I ever came to accuracy.

But seeing his reply did not contain the information wanted he looked at me thoughtfully and said:

"Hit's jes' like 'Old Crow!' Every morning for eighty-two years I ha' looked up at

the rocks o' that mountain 'en they h'aint changed a-bit."

The government records show that Pall Mall was made a post-office on April 3, 1832.

Old Coonrod was a man of Big Business for his time; one of force of character who dominated his community and who "sized his man" by standards that were peculiarly his own.

A man would come to him to buy a "poke" of corn or flour, or for a favor. To the surprize of the stranger the favor might be over-granted or the corn given without cost; or, upon the other hand, he would be bruskly dismissed without the least effort at explanation. Unknown to the stranger the condition of his "britches" had probably given him his credit rating with Old Coonrod, for he held that patches upon the front of trousers, if the seat were whole, were

decorations of honor, showing the man had torn them doing something, going forward. But, if the front of the trousers were good and the seat of them patched, no dealings of any nature were to be had with the dictator of the valley, for to Old Coonrod it meant the man "was like a rabbit; he could not stop without sitting down."

But the residents of the valley, many of them Methodists, claim this estimate works a hardship upon members of their faith for a good Methodist could wear the knees out at prayer and the seat out in "backsliding."

Old Coonrod's trading with the Indians was a series of successes. He is known to have had their confidence and friendship, and he was arbitrator between them and his neighbors whenever disputes arose.

Fentress county lying on the western slope of the Cumberlands was part of the great hunting-grounds of the Shawnees,

Cherokees, Creeks, Chickamaugas, Chickasaws, and even the Iroquois of New York. The basin of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, that part now Tennessee and Kentucky, was claimed by each of these tribes as its own, not as home but as a hunting-ground, and when bands of hunters of rival tribes met in the territory each fought the other as an invader, and their battles gave to Kentucky its Indian name, meaning in the Indian tongue the "Dark and Bloody Ground."

But Old Coonrod kept pace with all of them and prospered from their friendship, and an Indian trail turned and led close to where he lived. The last of the Indians passed through the valley in 1842.

As Old Coonrod prospered he bought land and slaves, and was a large owner of both in his day. He was a cautious and judicious purchaser of realty. The court records show

that at some time or other he was the owner of the most desirable parts of Fentress county. He held title to the land upon which Jamestown, the county seat, now stands, which is the "Obedstown" of Mark Twain's "Gilded Age." He owned "Rock Castle," a tract of hardwood timber that is enclosed by mountains and can be reached by but one passageway, a place that became famous during the Civil War. He bought and sold much of the county's best farming-land along Yellow Creek.

Fentress was made a county of Tennessee in 1823 and the first four pages of the new county's records of deeds show that within eighteen months Conrad Pile had added, through a number of trades, over six hundred acres to his already large holdings.

So cautious in land titles was he that at the time of his death he owned three rights to his home-place including the farming-land

along Wolf River. The first was his squatter's rights, which he had homesteaded. But against this, North Carolina in ceding the territory of Tennessee to the United States Government reserved title to the land grants the state had offered to her soldiers of the Revolutionary War, and "one Henry Rowan" of North Carolina entered warrants given him on March 10, 1780. The Revolutionary soldiers had twenty years to locate their grants, and in 1797 Rowan appeared with surveyors, claiming by his entry of 1780 the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf." He operated under two land warrants of 320 acres each, and in his registry of one of them he specified "a tract on the north side of Spring Creek (now Wolf River), together with the improvements of Coonrod Pile."

Old Coonrod traded with him, and Rowan took up his residence in what is now Overton

county. As late as 1817 there appeared "one Vincent Benham" with title under a conflicting grant dated in 1793. Old Coonrod traded with him and with "$10 in hand" Benham went his way.

But the deeds which Coonrod recorded were voluminous, with corners as explicitly marked as any land title of to-day. Up on one of the mountainsides upon a rock there is a crudely carved "X" which was made by Coonrod to mark a corner which called for a "beech tree" that has disappeared, and this mark and the forks of Wolf River, corners in Coonrod's titles, stand to-day as survey points for the boundaries of the farms now in the valley.

Coonrod built his home beside the spring, now known as "York Spring." Its yard includes the spot where he made his first camp and where he killed his first deer. Characteristic of him, he built well. The house

was hewn logs, large logs, some of them over fifty feet in length. And the dwelling is now owned and occupied by one of his great grandchildren, William Brooks, the only brother of the mother of Sergeant York. The house is to-day one of the most substantial in the valley. Just across the spring branch and up the mountainside is the York home.

Old Coonrod built one of the rooms without windows and with only one door. That door led into his own room and opened by his bedside. In this windowless room he kept his valuables and it was both a safe and a bank for him. Into a keg covered carelessly with hides he tossed any gold coin that came to him in his trades. His rifle was kept there. He had the prongs of a pitchfork straightened and sharpened. The latter was his burglar insurance and he felt amply able to take care of his savings. And

in those days men frequently passed through the valley whose occupations were unknown and whose countenances were often evil to look upon.

Pall Mall is not without its legend of the hidden keg of gold. It is known that Old Coonrod had his keg and kept in it his gold pieces. It is not known just when and why this method of saving was abandoned by him. But after his death no trace of the keg was found and it is said that upon his death-bed he tried to give his sons a message which was never completed, and it is believed he wished to reveal where his gold was hidden.

There are some who say he was seen to go up a ravine with a mysterious bundle and to return without it. The ravine is pointed out. It opens on the roadway about half-way between the Rains' store and the old home of Coonrod.

But there is no myth to the present-day

side of the story. More than squirrels and rabbits have been hunted up that ravine.

But the legend of the hidden keg of gold is popular in many of the valleys of the Appalachians, and it will even be found to have leaped the valley of the Mississippi and almost identical in form appear and appeal to the impressionable imaginations of those who live in the Ozark Mountains to the west of that river.

There was but one thing in which Old Coonrod stood really in fear, something not made or controlled by man. It was lightning. Whenever a heavy thunder-storm broke over the mountains Coonrod, even in the last years of his life when he had grown so fat, ran with all the speed he could command for the cave above the spring. Here he would stay, muttering and unapproachable, until the storm abated. Then he would come from the cave swearing in that deep

voice that carried both power and terror, and, as the story goes, "for hours 'niggers' would be hopping all over the valley."

Coonrod had a genuine admiration for the man or beast willing to fight for his rights. Once finding one of his jacks eating his growing corn, he put his dog upon him. The jack was old and small and shaggy. He turned upon the dog sent after him and seizing the aggressor by the hair of his back lifted him from the ground and maintaining his dignity trotted out of the corn-field carrying the squirming dog. That jack was pensioned. He was given his full supply of corn in winter and granted the freedom of the meadows and the mountainsides in summer. Old Coonrod would never sell him.

John M. Clemens, Mark Twain's father, lived in Jamestown when his "dwelling constituted one-fifteenth of Obedstown." He and Coonrod Pile were close friends, Pile

helping elect Clemens to be the first Circuit Court Clerk of Fentress county. Both were firm believers in the future value of the timber, coal, iron and copper to be found in the mountains. In the 30's both acquired all the acreage their resources would permit.

Mark Twain makes "Squire Si Hawkins" of "The Gilded Age," * conceded to be drawn from the life of his father, struggle to keep the value of the land unknown to the "natives." Squire Hawkins confides to his wife that the "black stuff that crops out on the bank of the branch" was—coal, and tells of his effort to keep a neighbor—from building a chimney out of it!

"Why it might have caught fire and told everything. I showed him it was too crumbly. Then he was going to build it of cop-

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per ore—splendid yellow forty per-cent ore. There's fortunes upon fortunes upon our land! It scared me to death. The idea of this fool starting a smelting furnace in his house without knowing it and getting his dull eyes opened. And then he was going to build it out of iron ore! There's mountains of iron here, Nancy, whole mountains of it. I wouldn't take any chance, I just stuck by him—I haunted him—I never let him alone until he built it of mud and sticks, like all the rest of the chimneys in this dismal country."

Again "Squire Hawkins'" appreciation of the speculative value of his lands is shown in a talk with his wife:

"The whole tract would not sell for even over a third of a cent an acre now, but some day people will be glad to get it for twenty dollars, fifty dollars, a hundred dollars an acre." (Here he dropped his voice to a

whisper and looked anxiously around to see there were no eavesdroppers—"a thousand dollars an acre!"

To-day many of the acres owned by Coonrod Pile and John M. Clemens have passed the hundred-dollar mark and are climbing toward that whispered and seemingly fabulous figure. And this, too, before the coming of the railroad for which "Squire Hawkins" could not wait.

Twain delighted to have "Squire Hawkins" sit upon "the pyramid of large blocks called the stile, in front of his home, contemplating the morning." But John M. Clemens had his practical side, and the specifications for the first jail for Fentress county, drawn by Clemens and in his own handwriting made part of the county's records in 1827, show a very substantial strain:

"To wit, for a jail, a house of logs hewed a foot square, twelve feet in the clear, two

stories high, and this surrounded by another wall precisely of the same description, with a space between the two walls of about eight or ten inches, and that space filled completely with skinned hickory poles, the ground floor to be formed of sills hewed about a foot square and laid closely . . . . the logs to extend through the inner wall of the building"—etc.

And that jail was standing serviceable and strong until a few years ago when the prosperity of Fentress county called for an edifice of red stone.

Clemens and Pile remained friends and competitive land owners until "with an activity and a suddenness that bewildered Obedstown and almost took away its breath, the Hawkinses hurried through their arrangements in four short months and flitted out into the great mysterious blank that lay beyond the Knobs of Tennessee"—to Mis-

souri, where a few months afterward "Mark Twain" was born.

Another friend of Coonrod Pile was David Crockett. The "Hero of the Alamo" had many hunts in Fentress county, upon the "Knobs" and along the upper waters of the Cumberland. The old Crockett home still stands a few miles to the north of Jamestown beside the road that leads to Pall Mall. It was in a house upon land owned by Coonrod Pile that "Deaf and Dumb Jimmy Crockett" spent the last years of his life, and from which he made so many journeys to locate the silver mine of the Indians who had held him captive and who pinioned him to the ground while they dug their ore, never allowing him to see where they worked, but using him to help carry the mined product. David Crockett in his autobiography tells the story of "Deaf and Dumb Jimmy" but he places the scene in Kentucky,

making probably the same mistake in the location of the state-line boundary which Coonrod Pile had made.

Coonrod Pile lived to the age of eighty-three and at the time of his death was the most powerful personality in Fentress county. His business interests had grown to such proportions that he had economic problems to solve and the simple practical methods he used are followed in the valley to-day.

He dug only so much coal as he could use, the transportation problem preventing its sale. He could only market the poplar, the cedar and such woods as he could float on the rises of the Wolf to the Cumberland river to be rafted. He raised cotton, but only the amount the women needed for their looms. He grew wheat and corn, but no more than was necessary for flour and meal for the neighborhood and to feed the stock he owned, laying aside a portion for use in

time of need for the improvident and unfortunate.

He was ready at any time to trade with anybody for almost anything. In the last score of the years of his life, the most successful financially, he found that the money he could accumulate came only from the sale of products that could move from the valley across the mountains by their own motive power—something that could go on foot. So he turned to stock-raising and with his own slaves cut the present roadway from Pall Mall to Jamestown, there to join with the old Kentucky Stock road which ran from Atlanta and Chattanooga, along the Cumberland plateau by Jamestown on to the north through Frankfort and Cincinnati.

Old Coonrod was not a one-price man on the realty he owned. If the purchase was for speculation he was a trader with his sights set high. If the buyer wanted a home,

he was generous. It meant the upbuilding of his community. So the people of that day lived in comradeship. There were few luxuries and no real want. If there was "a farming patch" to be cleared, the neighbors came from miles around and there was a "log-rolling." If it was a home or a crib to be built, it was a "log-raising," and everyone worked and made fun from it.

The steeple of a church arose in the valley. It was built by those of the Methodist faith. But before that and even afterward they held "camp-meetings" and "basket-meetings" where a community lunch was served under the trees and where the service lasted through the daylight hours, allowing for a mountain journey home. And the religious fervor was so sincere and intense at these meetings that they were called "melting sessions."

Up the mountainside above the York

spring, a space was cleared for shooting matches, where the prizes were beeves and turkeys, and where the men shot so accurately that the slender crossing of two knife-blade marks was the bull's-eye of the target. And every one went on hunts, long hunts when crops were laid by or winter had checked farm work. And as human nature is the same the world over, there was many an upright resident of the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" who left the plow standing in the furrow because the yelp and baying of the hounds grew warm upon the mountainside.

The families of mountain men are usually large in number, and the estate of Old Coonrod has passed through a long division. He had eight children, and his son Elijah Pile, the branch of the family to which Sergeant York belongs, had eleven children. That portion of the estate which Elijah in-

herited passed into good hands. He conserved his part, handled well the talents left with him; but the second division by eleven, together with the ravages of the Civil War and the years that followed, left only seventy-five acres, and far from the best of it, to Mary York, the truly wonderful little mountain mother who gave to Alvin York those qualities of mind and heart which stood him in good stead in the Forest of Argonne, who taught him to so live that he feared no man, and to do thoroughly and always in the right way that which he had to do. "Else," as she so frequently said to him, "you'll have to do hit over, or hit'll cause you trouble."

III

THE PEOPLE OF THE MOUNTAINS

III

The People of the Mountains

THE log cabin of the pioneer influenced architecture and gave to us the house of Colonial design, the first distinctively American type, for the Colonial home grew around the pioneer's two rooms of logs separated by an open passageway.

The muzzle-loading rifle—and it was the pioneer's gun—with its long barrel and its fine sights, gave confidence to the American soldier who carried it, for he trusted the weapon in his hands.

Progressive inventions finally displaced this rifle in military use, but for the accuracy of the shot it has never been surpassed, and it is to-day a loved relic and a valued hunting-piece. Men trained to shoot with it,

used to the slender line of its silver foresight and to the delicate response of its hair-trigger, have made rare records in marksmanship. The very difficulty of loading—the time it took—taught its users to be accurate and not spend the shot.

This rifle stopped the British at Bunker Hill and Kings Mountain, and over its long barrel Alvin York and some of the best shots of the American army learned to bring their sights upward to the mark and tip the hair-trigger when the bead first reached its object.

It was training acquired in the forest, the same manner of marksmanship, the same self-reliance and individual resourcefulness as a soldier that gave to Sergeant York the power to come back over the hill in Argonne Forest, bringing one hundred and thirty-two prisoners, and to the army under Andrew Jackson at New Orleans, more than a hun-

dred years before, the fighting resource to achieve victory with a loss of eight killed and thirteen wounded, while England's records show that "about three thousand of the British were struck with rifle bullets." *

The man trained behind the muzzle-loading rifle in all the wars America has fought has been individually a fighter and "a shot," formerly but little skilled in military training, who while obeying orders fought along lines of personal initiative. In the earlier wars of the nation this soldier was known as a "rifleman." It was with this class that General Jackson fought his campaigns against the Indians and the British, and at New Orleans "the bone and sinew of his force were the riflemen of Tennessee and Kentucky."

Against Jackson, England had sent the

* From "The True Andrew Jackson," by Cyrus Townsend Brady, Chap. IV, p. 88; published by J. B. Lippincott Co., 1906.

flower of Wellington's army, distinguished for famous campaigns on the Spanish peninsula against the marshals of Napoleon. Wellington said of these men in his "Military Memoirs": "It was an army that could go anywhere and do anything."

Late in life when General Jackson had grown old, had twice been President, and was spending his declining days at the "Hermitage," his home near Nashville, as calmly and peacefully as it was possible for the fiery old warrior to live, he was shown this appreciation by Wellington.

"Well," he said, "I never pretended I had an army that 'could go anywhere and do anything!' but at New Orleans I had a lot of fellows that could fight more ways and kill more times than any other fellows on the face of the earth."

Returning from the Indian wars and from the War of 1812, the mountaineers and

backwoodsmen, who were then rapidly settling up the valley of the Mississippi, hung their rifles over their open fireplaces, or between the rafters of their cabin homes and turned to the enjoyment of the peace they had won.

In the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" Old Coonrod Pile was still the dominant figure.

Those who had settled in the valley were prospering on its fertile soil. It was then, as it is to-day, remote from popular highways, but the valley had grown into a community almost self-supporting. The owners of the land had equipped their farms with such agricultural tools as were in use in those days, and the Wolf river had been dammed and a water-driven flour mill erected.

The houses tho built of logs and chinked with clay were comfortable homes,

where in winter wood-fires roared in wide chimney-places, where there was no problem of the high cost of living—and few problems of any kind relating to living.

The men of the valley farmed diversified crops, furnishing all that was needed for food and clothing, and they even raised tobacco for the pipes smoked at the general store run by Coonrod Pile in an end room of his home.

It was the day when the weaving-loom was the piano in the home, and all the women carded, spun and wove. The table-garden, the care of the house, the preparation of the meals and the making of the covering and the clothes were in the women's division of the labor. The families usually were large and every member a producer. To the girls fell shares of the mother's work. The boys helped in the fields, chopped the wood and rounded up the stock, that at

times wandered far into the mountains. There were bells on the cows, on the sheep and even the hogs, and the boys soon learned to distinguish ownerships by the delicate differences in the browsing "tong" in the tone of the bells.

Residents of the valley sold to the outside world the live stock they raised, and poultry and feathers and furs, and tar and resin from the pines on the mountaintops. They purchased tea, coffee and sugar, a few household and farm conveniences, and little else. The balance of the trade was heavily in their favor and they were prosperous and happy.

They had no labor problems. They recognized without collective bargaining the eight-hour shift—"eight hours agin dinner and eight hours after hit; ef hit don't rain;" as one old mountaineer, living there to-day, interpreted the phrase, " A day's work."

Even when the home of the mountaineer was a one- or two-room cabin, accommodations for any stranger could be provided, and if he wished to remain, work could be found for him. They observed without thought of inconvenience the Colonial idea of "bundling."

When the stranger proved worthy there would be a log-rolling and a space of ground cleared for him to till, and a log-raising in which the community joined, and made a merry occasion of it, to give him a home. The way was easy for his ownership of the land and the cabin. Prices for cleared land, around the middle of the last century, ranged from twenty-five cents to five dollars an acre.

In the valley the father never talked to the son of the dignity of labor. Much was to be done and every one labored and thought of it as but the proper use of the sunlight of a day.

Their life was primitive, rugged, but contented. Deer and bears were in the mountains, and wild turkeys were to be found in large flocks, while the cry of wolves added zest to the whine of a winter wind.

A cook-stove was an unknown luxury, and the women prepared their meals in the open fireplace. The men cut their small grain with a reap-hook and threshed it beneath the hoofs of horses.

The mode of life made men of strong convictions and deep feelings. But those feelings were seldom expressed except under the influence of religious devotions.

The ministers were all circuit riders and venerated leaders of the people of the mountainsides. They traveled the mountains on horseback, constantly exposed to hardships, and they labored devoutly without consideration of the personal cost. It was the custom for these itinerant ministers to give

free rein to their horses and read as they rode the mountain-paths, stopping for a prayer at every home they reached. Protracted meetings were held in almost every community they visited, for many months would pass before they returned. Funeral services would be held for all who had died during the absence of the minister. The meetings lasted so long as there was hope of a single conversion.

One of the preachers of those old days, who was born in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" and preached at Pall Mall as part of his circuit when ordained, has left a record of one year's work:

"During the conference year I preached 152 times, traveled 1,918 miles on horseback, prayed with 424 families, witnessed 80 conversions to God, and received 67 persons into the church. I sold about $40 worth of books, baptized 40 adults and 18 infants

. . . and received less than $30 of salary for same, and raised for benevolence $36.25. To God be all the glory! I have toiled and endured as seeing Him who is invisible. However, when God has poured from clouds of mercy rich salvation upon the people, and when in religious enjoyment, from the most excellent glory, I have been lifted to Pisgah's top, and have seen by faith the goodly land before me, I would not exchange this work for a city station."

Against the worldliness of some of his people, the same old mountain minister recorded a protest:

"I have known families who had three or four hundred dollars loaned out on interest, and not less than five hundred dollars' worth of fat cattle on the range, who did not own a Bible, or take any religious newspaper, nor any other kind, and did not have any books in their homes, and yet owned two or

three fiddles and three or four rifle-guns."

The day of prosperity and religious contentment at Pall Mall lasted until the coming of the Civil War.

Fentress county had contributed its pro rata of volunteers to the conflict with Mexico, and Uriah York, the grandfather of Sergeant York, was among those who stormed the heights at Chapultepec.

Tho this war was declared by a President who came from Tennessee, the Mexican conflict did not reach to the firesides and into the hearts of the people of the mountains of the state as other wars had done. So years passed in which there was no outward evidence of the war spirit of Fentress county that was soon to tear families asunder, leave farms untenanted and to obliterate graveyards under the rush of horses' hoofs.

The Yorks had come to Fentress county from North Carolina and settled on Indian

Creek. Uriah York was the son of John York, and they came from Buncombe county in that "Old North State," the county which had a reputation like Nazareth so far as turning out any good thing was concerned, and the path of the cant, derisive phrase, "All bunkum," leads directly back to the affairs of that good old county.

On Indian Creek the Yorks were farmers, but at his home Uriah started one of the few schools then in Fentress county. His school began after crops were laid by and ran for three months. He used but two text books—the "blue-backed speller" and the Bible.

There are men living to-day on Indian Creek who went to school under Uriah York, and they recall the uniqueness of his discipline as well as his school curriculum. The hickory rod was the enforcer of school rules, but full opportunity to contemplate the delicate distinction between right and wrong

was given to all. A three-inch circle was drawn upon the schoolroom wall and the offending pupil was compelled to hold his nose within the penal mark until penitent.

Young and active he took part in all the school sports in the long recess periods, for his school lasted all day. Learning at the end of one school term that the pupils had planned as part of the simple commencement exercises to duck him in Indian Creek, he exposed their plot, playfully defied them, left the schoolroom with a bound through an open window and led them on a chase through the mountains. He circled in his course so he could lead the run back to the schoolhouse. As evidence of goodfellowship and as an example of the spirit of generosity in the celebration of victory, he gave to each of the boys as they came in, a drink of whisky, from a clay demijohn he had concealed in the schoolroom.

But in those days whisky and apple brandy were considered a necessary part of household supplies, and there was but little drunkenness. Whisky and brandy were medicine, used as first aid, regardless of the ailment, while awaiting the arrival of the doctor with his saddlebags of pills and powders. Their social value, too, was recognized, and the gourd and demijohn appeared almost simultaneously with the arrival of any guest. But it was bad form—evidence of a weak will—for anyone, save the old men, to show the influence of what they drank. This was, however, a perquisite and one of the tolerated pleasures of old age.

In the records of a lawsuit tried in Fentress county in 1841 the price-list of some necessaries and luxuries are shown:

"To two gallons of liquor, $1; one quart of whisky and six pounds of pork, 80 cents; one deer-skin, 75 cents; two kegs of tar, $2;

two ounces of indigo, 40 cents; one gallon of whisky, 50 cents; five and one-half pints of apply brandy, 31¼ cents."

They were almost uneventful years at Pall Mall from the days of Coonrod Pile until the Civil War. Less than a score of years lapsed from the death of the pioneer in 1849 until over the mountains broke the war-storm in a fury that has no parallel except in wars where father has fought son, and brother fought brother; where the cause of war and the principles for which it is fought are lost in the presence of cruelties created in personal hatred and deeds of treachery perpetrated for revenge. A third generation had grown to manhood at Pall Mall.

In Fentress county, the polling of the vote upon secession was marked with bloodshed. The county was on the military border between the free and the slaveholding states. Coonrod Pile had been a slaveholder, but

few of the mountaineers were owners. Slavery as an institution did not appeal to their Anglo-Saxon principles; poverty had prevented slavery's advance into the mountains as a custom, and as racial distinction was not to be clearly defined into master and worker, the negro's presence in the mountains was unwelcomed. A war to uphold a custom they did not practise did not appeal to them; so as a great wedge the Alleghany mountains, extending far into the slave-holding states, was peopled with Union sympathizers.

Fentress county on the slope of the great mountain range and on the border between the territory firmly held by the North and by the South became a no-man's land, subjected successively to marauding bands from each side, a land for plunder and revenge.

Before the war the county had been sharply divided politically, and with few excep-

tions that alignment held. Those who were Union sympathizers went north into Kentucky and joined the Federal forces, and those on the side of the South went for enlistment in the armies of the Confederacy. The men who remained at home were compelled by public sentiment to take sides, and the bitterest of feeling was engendered. The raids of passing soldiers was the excuse for the organization, by both sides, of bands who claimed they were "Home Guards"—the Federals under "Tinker" Beaty, and the Confederates under Champ Ferguson. These bands, each striving for the mastery, soon developed into guerrillas of the worst type the war produced, and anarchy prevailed.

Churches were closed, for religious services were invaded that the bushwackers could get the men they sought. Homes were burned. Civil courts suspended. Post-

offices and post-roads were abandoned. No stores were kept open and the merchandise they formerly held was concealed, and there became a great scarcity of the necessaries of life. Many homes were deserted by entire families and their land turned out as common ground. There was waste and ruin on every hand, and no man's life was safe.

Each deed of cruelty was met with an act of revenge, until men were killed in retaliation, the only charge brought against them being, "a Northern sympathizer," or "a Southern sympathizer." There is not a road in the county not marked with the blood of some soldier or non-combatant.

No section of the great Civil War suffered so enduringly as that which was the boundary line between the sections, and no part of the boundary suffered more from devastations of war in the passing to and fro of

armed forces and from the raids of marauding bands, steel-heartened in quest of revenge, than did Fentress county.

At the outbreak of the war, Uriah York went north into Kentucky and joined the Federal forces. Ill, he had returned to the home of his wife's father at Jamestown, and while in bed learned of the approach of a band of Confederates. He arose and fled for safety to a refuge-shack his father-in-law had built in the forest of "Rock Castle." His flight was made in a storm that was half rain and half sleet, and from the exposure he died in the lonely hut three days afterward. Only forty years of age, he had served his country in two wars.

The "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" paid its tribute of blood and money. Elijah Pile had grown old and years before had succeeded his father, Coonrod Pile, as head of the family. All his sons had grown

to manhood. He was a non-combatant, but a Union sympathizer. His four sons were divided in their allegiance—two upon each side. And two of them paid the supreme price, and they paid for their convictions as they rode along public highways.

Conrad Pile, Jr., "Rod" as he was known, like his father, Elijah Pile, was a non-combatant, but sympathized with the North. In the autumn of 1863 for some cause, unknown to his relatives, he was taken prisoner by Confederate troops, members of Champ Ferguson's band. As they rode along the road with him, some shots were fired. They left him there.

In June of the following year, Jeff Pile, a brother of "Rod," was riding along the road beyond the mill that creaks in the waters of Wolf River. He was going to visit a brother. He had taken no active part in the war, but was a Southern sympathizer.

Some of "Tinker" Beaty's men galloped into sight, fired, galloped on. Mountain men fire but once.

But the murder of Jeff Pile threw a red shadow across the years that were to come after the war was ended.

The war-feuds of Fentress county did not end with the ending of the war. There was lawlessness for years. Some of the Union men and Union sympathizers, in the majority in the county during hostilities, assumed to the full the new power that came to them by the war's outcome. Conservative civic leaders sought to reestablish a condition of peace, but the lawless and desperate element prepared personally to profit from the situation.

Farms had been deserted and many of the owners of these lands who had fought on the side of the Confederacy were kept away through the threats of death should they re-

turn, and some who had remained throughout the war were forced to flee to protect their lives from those who coveted their property.

A series of land-frauds sprang up under the cloak of the law. Upon vacant farms false debts were levied; fake administrators took charge of lands whose owners had died during the conflict; other property was hastily forced under sale for taxes.

That the proceedings should appear legal, the foreclosures were by due process of law. But if quietly circulated warnings against a general bidding for property when offered at court sale were not effective, some well-known desperate character would appear at the sale and threaten anyone who dared bid against him.

The bitterness of the feeling of the two sides subsided slowly, but there was ever present the realization that old alinements

could be quickly and bloodily revived. Champ Ferguson, sought by the Federal authorities, appeared suddenly upon the streets of Jamestown. That day his old rival, "Tinker," was there. It was a personal battle the two leaders fought, while Jamestown looked on silently, fearful of the outcome. Beaty received three wounds, but escaped on horseback.

A short time afterward Ferguson was hanged at Nashville by order of court martial. The charge against him was that he had entered the hospital at Emery and Henry College and shot to death a wounded Federal lieutenant. Ferguson claimed justification as the Federal lieutenant, under orders to escort a war-prisoner—a Confederate officer and personal friend of Ferguson's —to headquarters, had, instead, stood his prisoner against a tree by a roadside and ordered a firing-squad to kill him. And the

court-martial indictment of Ferguson read —"and for other crimes."

One of "Tinker" Beaty's men was Pres Huff, who lived in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf." It was generally believed that he was the leader of the band who had ridden out of the woods and killed Jeff Pile, as he traveled unarmed along the Byrdstown road.

Huff's father had been shot. The scene of his death was where the branch from the York Spring crosses the public road at the Pile home. The deed was done by a band of Confederates who had taken the elder Huff prisoner, and neither Jeff Pile, nor his brothers, were to be connected with it, except in the quickly prejudiced mind of the victim's son.

The desperate character of Pres Huff is evidenced by the records of the United States Circuit Court for the Middle District

of Tennessee in the suit of the McGinnis heirs for land in Fentress county. Their bill recites:

"Armed men who were led and controlled by one Preston Huff, who was a brigand of the most desperate character, forced complainants' father and themselves to leave the county to secure their lives and kept them from the county by threats of most brutal violence. The history of these men and the times prove clearly that these threats were not idle, nor those who opposed them survived their vengeance."

At the foreclosure on the McGinnis property, Pres Huff rode his horse between the court officers and those attending the sale, and pistol in hand declared the land his by right of possession. The bill continues as follows:

"Preston Huff, who was the desperado heretofore referred to, publicly proclaimed

that he had fought for the land, had run the McGinnises from the county, and if anyone bid for the land against him he would kill him on sight. Even his co-conspirators would not brook his displeasure. The land was sold on his bid, no one dared oppose him. The history of his career shows it was wisdom to shun him. Many have been killed by him in the most cold and brutal manner."

There came to Pall Mall, when General Burnside was moving his Federal forces southward, a young man by the name of William Brooks. He had joined the Union Army at his home in Michigan. He was a daring horseman, handsome, fair and his hair was red—a rich copperesque red. The army moved on, but young Brooks remained in the valley. He claimed that as a private soldier he had done more than his share in the conquest of the South—and that the

conquest that should ever go to his credit was the conquest of Nancy Pile.

When they were married, his father-in-law, Elijah Pile, gave him a farm and he tilled it, and he smiled his way into the favor of the community.

He lived in the valley about two years, and a baby had been born to them. The feeling between the children of Elijah Pile and Pres Huff was silent but tense; over it there fell constantly the shadow of the murder of Jeff Pile.

Meeting down at the old mill one day, Pres Huff and "Willie" Brooks engaged in an excited argument. Between the dark-browed, sullen mountaineer and the slender, gay young man a contest seemed uneven, and was prevented. Huff told Brooks that the next time they met he would kill him.

They met next day, on the mountainside, on the road that leads by the Brooks home,

on across the spring-branch, up beside the York home and then up the mountain. Huff's riderless horse galloped on and stopped in front of a mountain cabin; his body lay dead in the road.

There was a hurried consultation at the home of Elijah Pile. Huff's friends, it was realized, would not be long in coming. Young Brooks went out of the house, down by the spring, and up the mountain back of it. He was never seen in the valley again.

Huff's friends waited.

Weeks afterward, Nancy Brooks, carrying her baby, went to visit a friend. She evaded the watchfulness of her husband's enemies, succeeded in crossing the Kentucky line and disappeared in the mountains to the north of it.

The friends of Pres Huff knew she would write home. Months elapsed, but finally a letter came, and was intercepted. She and

her husband were at a logging-camp in the northern woods of Michigan.

Secretly, extradition papers for Brooks were secured, and Huff's former partner in a mercantile business, fully equipped with warrants, appeared with a sheriff before the door of the cabin in the Michigan woods. Brooks was brought back to Jamestown, and put into the log-ribbed jail that John M. Clemens, "Mark Twain's" father, had built.

But there was no trial by law. The next night, through the moonlight and the pines, a little body of men rode. Up the valley, across the plateau, they went, and Jamestown was sleeping.

Taking Brooks from the jail they carried him three miles down the road toward Pall Mall. Here they bound a rope around his feet, unbridled a horse and tied the other end of the rope to the horse's tail. They taunted Brooks. But they could not make

him break his silence, until he asked to be allowed to see his wife and baby. Rough men laughed, and there was the report of a gun. The horse, frightened, galloped down the road, and bullets were fired into the squirming body as it was dragged over the rocks.

The war had steeled men for the coming of death and crime, but at the manner of the death of "Willie" Brooks a shudder passed over the mountainsides. To Nancy Brooks was born a son a short time afterward, and he was named after his father.

A silent, broken-hearted woman, Nancy Brooks took up again her life at her father's home. To the little girl she had carried on her flight to Michigan and to the boy whose hair had the copper-red of the father, she devoted herself. The girl had been named Mary, and she inherited the piquancy and wit that had made her mother the belle of

the valley, and as she grew to womanhood the mountaineers saw again the Nancy Brooks they had loved before war had come with its cold blighting fingers of death.

At the age of fifteen Mary Brooks met William York, the son of Uriah York, and they were married. A home was built for them, beyond the branch, beside the spring. And Alvin York was their third son.

IV

THE MOLDING OF A MAN

IV

The Molding of a Man

THE first year after the marriage of William York and Mary Brooks, they lived at the Old Coonrod Pile home, and William York worked as a "cropper." Securing the farm that had been given the bride, they modeled into a one-room home the corn-crib of Elijah Pile, that stood across the spring-branch and up the mountainside. It was a log crib, and they chinked it with clay, and using split logs from the walls of the old shed, a puncheon floor was made. The coming of spring brought the blossoms of flowers the girl-wife had planted.

Honeysuckle and roses have bloomed around that cabin each succeeding summer, and it proved the foundation of a home that

was to withstand the troubles of poverty in many winters. It was a home so rare and real that it pulled back to the mountains a son who had gone out into the world and won fame and the offers of fortunes for the deeds he had done as a soldier.

William York, in his simple philosophy of life, disciplined himself, and later his boys, to the theory that contentment was to be found in the square deal and honest labor. He was so fair and just in all relations with his neighbors that the people of the valley called him "Judge" York; and his honesty was so rugged and impartial that not infrequently was he left as sole arbiter even when his own interests were involved. In talks by the roadside, at the gate of his humble home, seated on the rocks that surround the spring, many a neighborhood dispute has been settled that prejudice could have fanned into a lawsuit.

Yet William York never prospered, as prosperity is measured by the accumulation of property, and it has been said of him that he "just about succeeded in making a hard living."

He was farmer, blacksmith, hunter—a man of the mountains who found pleasure in his skill with his rifle. But the memories of him that linger in the valley, or those that are revived at the mention of his name, are of him in the rôle of husband, father and friend.

The Civil War had scattered much of the wealth that Old Coonrod Pile had accumulated and Elijah Pile had conserved. The number of heirs brought long division to the realty and most of those who had benefited by the inheritance were all left "land poor."

To Nancy Brooks, as her part, came the home the old "Long Hunter" had built with such thoroughness and care, together with

seventy-five acres of land. This she left to her boy who had been named after his ill-fated father—and he lives there to-day. To Mrs. York had been given seventy-five acres, "part level and part hilly," that was the share of her aunt, Polly Pile.

In the cave above the spring, which was Coonrod Pile's first home, William York built a blacksmith's shop, where he mended log-wagons and did the work in wood and metal the neighborhood required. He farmed, and worked in the shop—but in his heart, always, was the call of the forests that surrounded him, and it was his one great weakness. A blast from his horn would bring his hounds yelping around him; and often, unexpectedly, he would go on a hunt that at times stretched into weeks of absence.

His hounds were the master pack of those hills. On his hunts when he built his camp-

fire at night he gathered the dogs around him and singled out for especial favors those whose achievements had merited distinction during the day. Following a custom that in those days prevailed among owners of hunting-hounds, the dog that proved himself the leader of the pack while on a hunt was decorated with a ribbon or some emblem upon the collar. Small game was abundant in the mountains that made the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf," but the deer and bear had withdrawn to the less frequented hills. The hunts were for sport; there was no real recompense in the value of the pelts.

Alvin was born in the one-room cabin on December 13, 1887. There were two older children—Henry and Joe. Alvin's early life was different in no way from that of other children of the mountains. He lived in touch with nature, and without ever know-

ing when or how the information came to him, he could call the birds by their names and knew the nests and eggs of each of them, knew the trees by their leaves and their bark, and was familiar with the haunts of the rabbit and the squirrel, the land- and the water-turtle. While still too small for the rough run of the mountains, he has stood, red-eyed, by the gate of his home and watched his father and the hounds go off to the hunt. And as he grew, his hair took on that color that trace of him while at play could be lost in the red-brush that grew upon the mountainside.

There was one part of the routine of the week at Pall Mall that has interested Alvin York from early boyhood. It was the shooting-matches, held on Saturday, on the mountainside, above the spring, just where a swell of the slope made a "table-land," and where a space had been cleared for these

tests of skill. The clearing was long and slender, such a glade through the trees as the alley of the mountain bowlers which Rip Van Winkle found in the Catskills—only the shooting-range was longer. A hundred and fifty yards were needed for one of the contests.

This aisle had been cut through a forest of gray beech and brown oaks. At the points where the targets were to be set the clearing widened so that the sunlight, filtering through the leaves and flickering upon the slender carpet of green, could fall full and clear.

Each Saturday the mountaineers were there—and William York and Alvin were among the "regulars." Often there were fifty or more men, and they came bringing their long rifles, horns of powder, pouches made of skin in which were lead and bullet molds, cups of caps, cotton gun-wadding;

carrying turkeys, driving beeves and sheep, which were to be the prizes. And when the prizes gave out, some of the men remained and shot for money—"pony purses," they were called.

The turkey-shoots were over two ranges—one forty yards and one a hundred and fifty yards. At the latter range the turkey was tied to a stake driven in the center of the opening at the further end of the glade. A cord, about two feet in length, was fastened to the stake and to one leg of the gobbling, moving target. It was ten cents a shot, tossed to the man who offered the prize.

Often the bird fell at the first trial, and a hit was any strike above the turkey's knee. But the long-distance turkey-shoots were the opening events, and the marksman had his gun to warm up, his eye to test and his shooting nerve to be brought to calmness. So frequently it would happen that the entrance

money ran into a sum that gave a prize value to the turkey, as prices ran for turkeys in those days. There was the element of chance for the man offering the prize that was always alluring.

The second turkey-shoot was held at the forty-yard range. But the bird was now tethered behind a log, so that only his head and red wattles could appear. Here, too, the turkey was given freedom of motion and granted self-determination as to how he should turn his head in wonder at the assemblage of men before him; or, if he should elect, he could disappear entirely behind the log if he found something that interested him upon the ground nearby, and the marksman must wait for the untimed appearance of the bobbing head. It took prompt action and a quick bead to score a hit.

And it was years afterward, after Alvin York had become the most expert rifle-shot

that those mountains had ever held, that he sat in the brush on the slope of a hill in the Forest of Argonne and watched for German helmets and German heads to bob above their pits and around trees—just forty yards away.

The event in which centered the interest of all gathered at those Saturday matches, was the shooting for the beef.

Each man prepared his own target—a small board, which was charred over a fire built of twigs and leaves. On this black surface was tacked a piece of white paper, about two by three inches in size, and in the center of the bottom margin of the white paper was cut a notch—an inverted "V," not over a half-inch in height. This permitted the marksman to raise the silver foresight of his rifle over a black, charred surface until the hairline of the sight fit into the tip of the triangle cut into white paper. It was a pin-

point target that left to the ability of the marksman the exactness of his bead.

The tip of the triangle in the paper was not the bull's-eye. It was simply the most delicate point that could be devised upon which to draw a bead.

The bull's-eye was a point at which two knife-blade marks crossed. When the target was in position this delicately marked bull's-eye could not be seen by the shooter.

With practice shots they established how the gun was carrying and the direction in which the nerves of the marksman's eye were at the time deflecting the ball. Finally the marksman drew his bead on the tip of the triangle and where the shot punctured the white paper the bull's-eye would be located.

This was done by moving the white paper until the knife-blade cross showed through the center of the hole the bullet had made in it. The paper in this position was retacked

upon the board, and underneath was slipped a second piece of paper making the paper target appear as if no hole had been torn through it. The bull's-eye so located was usually within a half-inch radius of the triangle tip.

So exact was the marksmanship of these men that they recognized that neither gun nor man shot the same, day after day. They knew a man's physical condition changed as these contests progressed, and that the gun varied in its register when it was hot and when cool.

The range for the beef-shoot was forty yards "ef ye shot from a chunk." Twenty-seven yards, or about two-thirds the distance, if the shot was offhand. "A chunk" was any rest for the rifle—a bowed limb cut from a tree, the fork of a limb driven firmly into the ground, a part of a log—anything that was the height to give the needed low level

to the rifle-barrel when the shooter lay sprawled behind the gun. The permission to shoot from the rest was a concession to poorer marksmanship. Shooting offhand required nerve, and steadiness of nerve, to "put it there, and hold it."

The science of marksmanship they learned through experience. The rifle-ball, forced down through the muzzle, was firmly packed and the cap carefully primed to prevent a "long fire." In taking aim in the offhand shots the gun's barrel was brought upward so the target was always in full view, and as the bead was drawn the body was tilted backward until an easy balance for the long barrel was found. The elbow of the arm against which the butt of the rifle rested was lifted high, awkwardly high, but this position prevented any nervous backward jerk or muscular movement of the arm that might sway the barrel. Only the weight of

the forefinger was needed to spring the hair-trigger. When the gun-sights were nearing the tip of the black triangle, the marksman ceased breathing until the shot was fired.

So accurate were they, that when the bullet tore out the point where the two knife-blade marks crossed, it was simply considered a good shot. It was called "cutting center." But to decide the winning shot from among those who cut center it was necessary to ascertain how much of the ball lay across center.

Each contestant who claimed a chance to win brought his board to the judges for award. For each one of them a bullet was cut in half, and the half, with the flat side up, was forced into the bullet hole in the target until level with the board's surface. With a compass the exact center of the face of the half bullet was marked—a dent, as if made by a pin-point. Then across the

surface of the bright, newly-cut lead, the knife-blade marks of the original bull's-eye, partly torn away by the shot, were retraced. The distance between the pin-dent center and the point where the knife-marks crossed could then be exactly measured.

When the cross passed directly over the dented center, the shot was perfect and the mountaineers called it "laying the seam of the ball on center."

In the beef-shoots it was a dollar a shot. Each man could purchase any number of shots. When the pot contained the number of dollars asked for the beef the contest began. The prize was divided into five parts. The two best shots got, each, a hind-quarter of the beef. The third and fourth, the forequarters; the fifth of the winners, the hide and tallow. The beef was slain at the scene of the shoot, each winner carrying home his part.

William York has been known to carry the prize home on hoof—having made the five best shots. But this was unusual, for all the mountaineers grew up with a rifle in their hands and they knew how to use it.

At the shooting-matches it was again "Judge" York. He always handled the compass in making the awards. To the shooting-matches, still held at Pall Mall, Sam York, Alvin's brother, brings the compass and the rifle which his father had used.

The contest for the sheep was under the same conditions that surrounded the beef-matches; only the entrance fee was smaller. Usually it was six shots for a dollar. This odd division of the dollar, made to fit their term, "a shilling a shot," shows the people of the valley clinging to their English customs and still influenced by the Colonial period in America. In Colonial days in many parts of the country the shilling's

value was placed at sixteen and two-thirds cents.

Contests for the "pony purses" were consolation-shoots for those who had made no winning, and to gratify that element who for the love of the sport would keep the matches going until in the day's dimming light the sights of the gun could not be used.

One day at one of these shooting-matches at Pall Mall I witnessed a demonstration of the imperturbability of these mountain men. One of the contestants had cut center and about a third of the ball lay across it, when Ike Hatfield, a cousin of Alvin's, took "his place at the line."

He was young, over six feet in height, slender and erect as a reed, and only his head drooped as his rifle came into position. Some one said to the man whose shot, so far, was the winning one:

"Git his nerve; else he'll beat you!"

There are no restrictive rules on the comments or actions of contestants or spectators —there is usually a steady flow of raillery toward the one at the shooting-post. To get Hatfield's nerve, the man ran forward waving his hat, offering his services to get a fly off Hatfield's gun. The rifle-barrel continued slowly to rise. There was no recognition of the incident, no movement seen in the tall figure. Then his opponent talked and sang; and as this produced no noticeable effect, he danced, and stooping, began "to cut the pigeonwing" directly under the rifle-barrel.

At this a soundless chuckle swept over Hatfield's shoulders. With a face motionless he drew backward his gun and turning quietly, spat out a quid of tobacco as if it were all that interfered with his aim. He again slowly raised his rifle and fired, despite continued efforts to disconcert him.

He walked leisurely back to the crowd, rested his gun against a tree and took his seat on the ground. His only comment was:

"I think I pestered him."

The judges found that Hatfield had laid "the seam of the ball on center," and won.

In these contests a mountain marksman will shoot eight or ten times and often so closely will each shot fall to the knife-blade cross that the hole cut by all of them in the white paper-target would be no larger than a man's thumb-nail. One of the favorite methods of "warming up" used by John Sowders, the closest competitor that Alvin York had in hundreds of matches, was to drive fifteen carpet-tacks halfway into a board, then step off until the heads of the tacks could just be seen, and with his rifle Sowders would finish driving twelve or thirteen out of the fifteen.

It was not astuteness on the part of the German major, as he lay flat upon the ground in that Argonne Forest under the swaying radius of Alvin York's rifle, that caused the major to propose, when he found his men were given no time to get a clear shot at the American sergeant, that if Alvin York would stop killing them he would make the Germans surrender. In the shooting-matches back in the mountains of Tennessee that American soldier had been trained to the minute for the mission then before him. But there were more powerful influences than his marksmanship that gave to Sergeant York the steadiness of nerve, the coolness of brain and the courage to fight to victory against such overwhelming odds.

Back in the mountains in the days of William York, there were other forms of amusement than the shooting-matches. The

"log-rollings," the "house-raisings," which always ended in a feast or barbecue, continued popular with the people. And they had "corn-huskings," to which all the neighbors came.

The "corn-husking" was a winter sport. These, at times, were held at night under the light of hand-lanterns the mountaineers used to guide themselves with over the rough roads and along mountain-paths. But day or night, the husking ended with a feast. The ears to be husked were piled in a cone on the corn-crib floor, and usually at the bottom and in the very center of the cone a jug of whisky, plugged with a corn-cob stopper, was hidden. With songs and jokes they made sport of the work, each trying to be first to reach the jug. Once the jug was secured, the huskings ceased, and it was a fair contest between the corn's owner and his guests to see how much or how little could

be done before the jug-shaped goal was reached.

Seated on the floor around the pile each of the huskers sought to make a narrow cut in the corn before him to reach the prize more quickly. It was the farmer's part to have the corn piled in such a toppling cone that the ears above would roll down as fast as the inroads could be made, and often the sliding ears entirely buried a husker. He must then draw back to the edge of the pile and start again. The shout of victory that went up when the prize was pulled forth warned the women folk at the house that they must make ready for the coming of hungry men with appetites well whetted on a product of corn. The next day, the farmer-host, without help, shucked the ears that were left upon his corn-crib floor.

Alvin with the mountainsides as his play-ground grew sturdy and resolute. He had

been put to work by his father when first old enough to hold a hoe, to help about the house, pack water and bring in wood. The sparks that bounced from the anvil in the shadow of the cave fascinated him and he hung around the blacksmith's shop and learned to blow the bellows for his father and keep the fire hot. He soon grew large enough to swing the sledge, and he turned the shoes and made them ready. All of this wrapped hard muscles over a body that was unusually large for his age. His companions began to call him "The Big-un" and the by-name still clings to him. This, together with a calmness and an unmatched reserve, gave him the prestige of leader among his boy associates. At the age of fifteen he swung the sledge with either hand and was a man's match in wrestling bouts. One of his neighbors gave this view of him:

"Alvin wuz a quiet, straight-going boy.

When he started to shoe a mule he always did hit no matter how troublesome the mule. He wuz so quiet about what he wuz doing that we never noticed much o' that side of his character before he went away. But now we see hit."

In a season of prosperity William York moved from the cave and built a blacksmith's shop beside the road where it forks, where one of the forks turns down the middle of the spring-branch bed, on its way to the mill and to Byrdstown.

And he and Mary remodeled their home, making a two-room cabin of it. Eleven children were born to them—eight boys and three girls.

Most of the winters of the thirty years of married life pressed privations upon them. Much of the seventy-five acres was poor soil, and the earnings from the shop were small. The charge of William York

for blacksmith's work was always made in full realization that it was something done for a friend and neighbor. Seldom was a job done for cash. Instead, at some time that was convenient to the customer, he would call and ask the amount he owed, and usually from William York's book of memory the account was made out. And not in thirty years was it disputed, or held to be exorbitant.

There have been winters of privation in the valley for all of those dependent upon small acreage and uncertain crops, but there was no real want or suffering from the lack of the necessaries of life. Then, as it is to-day, the community spirit in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" stood guard at the mountain passes and no real poverty could enter. The farmers' bins were open to any neighbor in need. The storekeeper willingly waited until some livestock were

sold, or even until the next crop came in. For the wants of his family there was credit for the man who lived in the valley and worked. He could not speculate on the wealth of his neighbor, but there was never the need of a real need. Old Coonrod Pile's theory of the distinctive difference in the location of trouser patches is still regarded as a sound basis for business transactions. Those who have tried to live there upon as little work as they could do have sooner or later followed the path of the setting sun, and from the valley that indents the western slope of the great mountain range, that path leads downward.

A visitor from the city once asked Mrs. York if she did her own work:

"Sure enough," the little lady said, "and part of other people's. We had to. To raise so many children and keep them right is a great big job."

A number of years went by in the period of Alvin's boyhood when no school was held that he could attend. The school term was only for three months, beginning early in July. It was found impractical to hold sessions in the winter, for many of the children lived long distances away and the branches from the mountain springs that crossed the roadways and fed the River Wolf, would go on rampages that could hold the pupils water-bound over night. The schools in the mountains received no aid from the state and in the remote districts it was difficult to secure teachers except in the pleasant summer months. The school term could not begin earlier than July, for it must wait until crops were laid by, for the students ranged in ages from six to twenty years, and the larger boys were needed on the farms. Then it was the time for the potatoes to be gathered, and tomatoes hung red upon the vine and were

ready for pulling. The fall period of the farm was on.

The progress which Sergeant York was able to make in all the years of his school life would be about equal to the completion of the third grade of a public school. He was not sufficiently advanced to become interested in reading and self-instruction before he was called to the army. He had been but a few miles away from the valley, where the men, as do other men of the mountains, live in the open of the farm and forest and think in terms of their environments. The need of an education had not come home to him.

It was thus equipped that Sergeant York came into the presence of the generals of the Allied armies and sat at banquet boards with the leading men of this country in politics and business.

But never in the experiences that have

been crowded into the past two years of his life has he met a situation he could not command, or one that broke his calmness and reserve.

Clearly and quickly he thinks, but those thoughts flow slowly into words. He is keenly appreciative of his own limitations and quietly he observes everything around him. From early childhood he had been taught to be swift and keen in observation—the rustling of a leaf might be related to a squirrel's presence, and behind each moving shadow there is a cause and a meaning.

When he came to Prauthoy, France, the soldiers sought to honor him by having him carry the Division flag in the horse show. All was new to him and he was told but little of the routine expected of him. He had become the man whom all the American soldiers wished to see, and his presence was the feature of the occasion. The officers of his

own regiment watched him closely, and not a mistake did he make in all the day's maneuvers. A comment of one of the officers was: "He seems always instinctively to know the right thing to do."

He came from a cabin in the backwoods of Tennessee but he was raised under influences that make real men. A boy's ideal, in his early life, is the father who guides him, and Sergeant York had before him a character that was picturesque in its rugged manhood and honesty, and inspiring in its devotion to right and justice. The very privations he endured and that he saw influencing his home throughout his childhood were due to principle, for William York would owe no man beyond the period of his promise to pay. In the light of the sparks from the anvil in the shop in the cave, sparks that burned brighter even than the light of day, a comradeship between father and son was formed,

and they were companions until the boy reached manhood when the death of the father separated them.

There was nothing pretentious about the home in which he was raised. It was but a cabin, yet the chairs, the tables were of seasoned oak, hand-made, solid. The puncheon floor was worn smooth with use and over it was a polished glow from the care of cleanliness, showing purity was there. The walls were papered with newspapers. That was to keep out the winter's wind, but over the windows were curtains of white muslin, and a scarf of it ran the length of the simple board mantel-shelf, and in season the blossom of some flower swayed there. Within the home, no angry words were heard, but often there was laughter and song, and when the formulas for conduct were not followed, even the words of correction were affectionately spoken.

As the boy's first steps were guided by tender hands, so the proper way to walk through life was pointed out with gentle words and simple truths. The mother's teachings were the products of an untrained mind, but her philosophies came from a brain that has the power to think clearly and quickly and is never influenced by either anger or excitement—qualities transmitted eminently to her son. This little mother in the mountains, unread and untutored, with only the dictates of her own heart to guide her, had early adopted as her guiding philosophy the belief that the greatest thing in life is love.

So the impressionable, observant boy realized that life in the rugged mountains around him called for strength and endurance, but in his home, or wherever his mother was concerned there must be gentleness and love.

And she has been the greatest influence in his life. He has always listened to her counsels, except in a brief period of wildness in young manhood. As his standard of life was formed under her teachings, it may be again said of him—but this time from the moral standpoint: "He seems always instinctively to know the right thing to do."

It was the love for his mother, his love of his homelife in Pall Mall—and the sweetheart who was waiting for him there—that called him back to the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" after he had gone out into the world and won fame among men.

The very sunlight falls gently on the verdant beauty of that valley, and the seven mountains rise around it as tho they would shield it from the contending currents of the world.

Over the valley there comes a long gray

dawn, for the sun is high in the heavens when its slanting rays first fall on the silver waters of the Wolf. And through this dawn the men are moving, feeding stock, harnessing their teams, and many of them sing as they ride to their work in the fields, for they are content. The tinkling of the bells on the cows grow fainter as the cows browse along the paths that lead to their mountain pastures. Up and down the road in companionable groups the pigs are moving, audibly condoling with each other over the lack of business methods that caused the loss of the location of the entrance to the field of corn. A crow flaps lazily across the valley, and over the crest of the mountain the sun comes up.

And the summer twilight there is long, and as it dips into night a drowsiness rises fog-like over the valley. When a half-moon hangs between the mountains its light is

that of drooping drowsy lids. The lamps in the cabins on the mountainsides gleam but a brief time and go out. The descending of the shade of night is the universal bedtime of the mountain people.

An occasional swinging light may still be seen, but it is the mountaineer giving attention to some trouble among his stock. Then, there is silence over the valley, except for the chorus of katydids and the whistle of the gray owl to his mate in the woods. Now and then there comes the soft, faint clank of a cow-bell, different from its sound as the cows run the road or feed in the pasture. It is a slow and sleepy tang that soothes the ear.

But the mountain curfew is the bark of a dog. Somewhere up on the range a hound will call to another that all is well with him in his watch of the night, and the family he guards are all abed. The aroused neighbor

calls to the dog at the cabin next to him, and the message that "all's well" sweeps on the voices of the hounds on down the valley until it ends in an echo in the crags.

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THE PEOPLE OF PALL MALL

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The People of Pall Mall

HEY are a tranquil people who pass their days as do those who now live in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf." They are free from invidious jealousies and the blight of avarice toward each other, free from doubt of the rectitude of their daughters and relieved from solicitude that the future of their sons, if they remain in the valley, will be influenced by dissipation or dishonesty—a people who find in the changes of the weather and its effect upon crops their chief cause for worry.

Through the gray dawn the farmer looks up to the skies for his weather report for the day. As he works he watches the clouds scurrying across the mountaintops, and

when he notes they are banking against the unseen summit of the Blue Mountains that rises to the east, he knows that rain is soon to come. Some local unknown bard, watching those banking clouds, has left a lyric to his people, and I heard a gray-bearded mountaineer singing it as he predicted the break of a summer drought:

"The sun rose bright
But hid its head soon,
'Twill rain a-fore night
Ef hit don't rain a-fore noon."

With their homes back in the mountains nearly fifty miles from the railway, with a journey before them over rocky roads and up mountainsides to the other communities of Fentress county, the people of Pall Mall live in the communion and democracy of one great family. Children call old men by their Christian names. In it is not the slightest element of disrespect, and it is in-

stead an appreciated propriety which the old men recall as the custom of their boyhood. Rev. R. C. Pile, pastor of the Church of Christ in Christian Union, the church of the valley, is "Rosier" to everyone. All worship together in the same church; all toil alike in the fields. In the predial, peaceful routine of their days there is a positive similarity. A farmer will ride direct to the cornfield or the meadow of a neighbor, knowing the neighbor will be found at work there. And, as through the gray dawn of the day they look up to the skies, the wish of one for rain will be found to be the community desire.

The social meeting-point of the people of the valley is the general store of John Marion Rains. The storehouse sits by the roadside at the foot of a mountain in the western end of the valley, just where the road tumbles down to the solid log cabin old Coonrod

Pile had built, to the spring and the York home.

One end of the long porch of the store-house, as it runs with the road, is but a step from the ground, and the mountain falls away until the floor is conveniently up to the height of a wagon's bed; then the road dips again until the porch is on a level with the saddle-stirrups and the women dismount with ease from their high-backed, tasseled side-saddles as they come in sunbonnets and ginghams.

The men of the mountains seldom hurry on any mission. Their walk is a slow and foot-sure tread. When they come to the store, if only for a plug of tobacco, they remain with John Marion for a social hour or more. Their purchase is an incident, the last act before they depart.

It is rare during the daylight hours that someone is not sitting on the porch, or in

one of the chairs of the row that skirts the show-cased counter just within the door, or somewhere upon the open horseshoe kegs that border the floor of the counter opposite. They are waiting to hear if anything new has happened, for all the news of the neighborhood comes to the store. The storekeeper is sure to know whether the stranger seen passing along the road in the morning stopped at the York's, or went on to Possum Trot or to Byrdstown.

The very commodities upon the shelves and counters of that store are in friendly confusion. Canned meats, pepper, candy, soap and chewing-tobacco may be found in one partition; while next to them, groceries, shotgun-shells, powder and chinaware are in a position of prominence according to the needs of the past purchaser. In the rear, piled high, are overalls and "store clothes," hats and shoes.

But the counter, facing the shelves of dress-goods for the women, is free of obstructions, and its surface is worn smooth and polished by the years of unrolling of bolts of cloth, while at every quarter-yard along the counter's rear edge is a shining brass tack-head—the yardstick of the department. A pair of large shears swing prominently from an upright partition. The department is orderly and neat, a mute tribute to those who patronize it.

Into the show-cases has crept every article of small dimension that had no habitat or kind upon the shelves around—from laces to lead pencils. Upon nails in the rafters of the ceiling swing buckets and dippers and lamps, currycombs and brushes.

Off in an L that runs at a right angle from the main store are bacon and tires for wagon wheels, country-cured hams and brooms, flour, kerosene and plows.

Under the counter by the door is an open wooden box of crackers ,and its exact location and the volume of the supply are known to every child in the mountains around. Out of it comes their lagnappe for making a journey to the store.

Beside the door upon a shelf sits the water-bucket, kept cool by frequent replenishing from the York spring. Here every man who enters stops; and, after he has shifted his quid of tobacco, looked around, and made his cheerful greeting a hearty one with, "Howdy people!" he lifts the dipper filled with its pleasing refreshment—and the surplus goes accurately, in a crystal curve, to the back of some venturesome chicken that has come upon the store porch.

Above the door as you enter hangs a stenciled, uneven, unpunctuated sign, "NO CREDIT CASH OR BARTER." But that sign has lost its potency. It is yellow

with age and no longer is there anyone who believes in it. It was hung when John Marion first opened his store, and before he knew his people and wanted cash or barter for his wares.

There is trading every day that is barter. But it is the women bringing chickens under their arms, or a basket of eggs. The eggs are deposited in a box, the storekeeper counting them aloud as he packs them for shipment; or one of the eleven Rains' "kids" is bestirred to the barn with the chickens, where they remain in semicaptivity until the egg and poultry man, in an old canvas covered schooner, comes on his weekly rounds. And the cash value to the barter is traded to a cent. A "poke" of flour or of sugar or a cut of tobacco usually evens the transaction.

It is many a journey around the store that John Marion makes in a day. The decision to purchase each article is announced slowly

and as tho it were the only thing desired. The plump and genial storekeeper goes leisurely for it, and with a smile of satisfaction places it before the customer. There is a moment of silence, then a journey for the next need, and it is only in balancing the barter that the merchant makes a suggestion.

In a small glass show-case is refuting testimony that the sign over the door of NO CREDIT had been discredited long ago. The charge account is open to everyone. A memorandum of the purchase is made upon a strip torn from a writing-tablet or upon a piece of wrapping-paper and tossed into the show-case, among many others of its kind, until the customer "comes around to settle up." Then, with an unerring instinct, John Marion can pull from the tumbled pile of memoranda the records of the charges he seeks. If the charge account is to remain open until the next crop comes

in, on some rainy day he will transcribe the charge to his day-book.

The clocks of the valley are not controlled by the government's or the railroads' standard of time. They go by "sun time" and are regulated by the hour the almanacs say the sun should rise. John Marion winds the store clock after it has run down and he sets it by no consultation with anything but his feeling as to what hour of the day it should be.

At least once a week every man who lives in the valley is at the store, but Saturday is the popular meeting-time. When the chairs and the row of horseshoe kegs are occupied, the men rest their hands behind them on the counter and swing to a place of comfort upon it, or they sit upon the window-sills, keeping well within the range of raillery that welcomes the coming and speeds the parting guest. It is a good-natured humor

that these mountaineers love, quick as the crack of a rifle and as direct as its speeding ball. There is never an effort to wound. But always there is the open challenge to measure resource and wit.

Many a trade in mules that owners have ridden to the store has resulted from the defense against the mule-wise critics who several times outnumber the man who rode the mule. If the mount is a newly acquired one, especial pleasure is found in a seemingly serious pointing out why any sort of trade was a bad one for that particular animal.

A mule trade is a measure of business capability. No lie is ever told in answer to a direct question, but no information is relinquished unless a question is asked. If no hand is passed over the mule's eyes, and there is no specific inquiry about the eyes before the trade is consummated, and the animal proves blind in one of them, the fault

lies in the mule-swapping ability of the new owner. Over no question could two men be seemingly so widely apart as the two when both are anxious to trade. They are jockeying for that "something to boot" which always makes at least one participant satisfied in a mountain mule trade.

There are pitfalls for the unwary in the conversations that pass across the store aisle. Bill Sharpe, who has spent eighty-two summers in the valley—and the winters, as well—with seeming innocence started a discussion as to how far a cow-bell could be heard. He sat quietly as several compared their experiences while hunting cattle in the mountains. Finally the old man said his hearing was not so good as it used to be, but he remembered once "hearing a cow-bell all the way from Overton county." Down the line a rural statistician figured it must be seventy miles from Pall Mall to

the nearest point in Overton county, and the jests began to explode in the old man's vicinity. He conceded many changes since he was young, but so far as he could see there was evidently no improvement in man's hearing powers. When all his efforts to secure a side bet that he could prove his assertion were futile, he explained:

"Wall, boys, ye got away. En once I won two gallons o' whisky on hit. I was in Overton county. I bought a cow. As she had a bell on her, and I drove her home, I heard that cow-bell all the way from Overton county."

On Saturday afternoon, or a rainy afternoon, when Alvin York and the "Wright boys," and one of them, "Will" Wright, is president of the bank at Jamestown; Ab Williams, gray of hair and bent, but vigorous of tongue; his son, Sam Williams, tall and straight as an Indian and equally up-

standing for his opinions; John Evans, a local justice of the peace; Bill Sharpe, who lives in the shadow of "Old Crow"; T. C. Frogge, of Frogge's Chapel, who farms, preaches or teaches school as the demand arises; "Paster" Pile and his brother, Virgil Pile, who has been County Trustee; when any of these are among those gathered at the store, there is a tournament of wit, with a constant change of program.

Many a time John Marion is compelled to retreat behind a grin when in a lull "a shot" is taken at him, and his smile is his acknowledgment that he cannot be expected to add up a charge-slip and at the same time defend himself against a care-free man upon a keg of horseshoes.

But the storekeeper is never taken by surprize at the badinage of his patrons. One afternoon after a long wait and another day in the valley seemed sure to pass with no

unusual incident, an old fellow arose from one of the chairs, stretched himself, and said:

"John Marion, I want a shift o' shirts. Else, I got to go to bed to git this-un washed."

The storekeeper laid out several of dark color:

"Here's some you can wear without change till the shirt falls off."

"That's right, John; gimme one thet won't advertise thet the ole woman's neglectin' me."

Another was uncertain about the size of a pair of overalls for his boy:

"Dunknow, John Marion! One tight enough to keep the bees out—a kid shore wastes energy when a bee gits in 'em."

When it is "good dusk" the storekeeper closes the wooden shutters and fastens them by looping a small cotton string over a nail.

All the mountaineers are on their way home, but they had not parted without an interchange of invitation:

"Home with me, boys; home! Ef I can't feed ye well, I'll be friendly."

Or, maybe, the invitation is not so sweeping, and holds a reservation:

"Spend the night with me! I'll not stop you; I'll let you leave afore breakfast."

Over any gathering at the store a pall of silence descends when a stranger rides up. If the newcomer is a new drummer unfamiliar with the ways of the mountains, if he comes imbued with the belief that the voice with the smile wins, and talkatively radiates his individual idea of fellowship and democracy, one by one his auditors silently drop away. To them, an insincere, a false note of democracy has been struck. Perhaps around the door there will linger some of the mountain boys waiting to satisfy their

curiosity over the contents of the drummer's cases.

John Marion Rains always listens to the story of prices, but his shelves are really replenished by the drummers who drive to the barn instead of the store, who unhitch their own horses and feed them from the storekeeper's supply of corn, who come into the center of the crowd only after they have unobtrusively lingered awhile in the fringe of it.

One afternoon one of these mountaineers who had withdrawn to the porch, unhitched, without being solicited, a drummer's horse, and he had trouble in pulling off a loose shoe and renailing it. The drummer wanted to pay for the work, but the mountaineer shook his head. The deed had been done for the horse. The visitor insisted, and finally the price was fixed:

"Bout a nickel!"

A mountaineer seldom asks questions. Instead he makes a statement of that which appears to him to be the fact, and if unchallenged or uncorrected, it is accepted as the proper deduction. Early in my visit to Pall Mall I learned my lesson.

"Have you lived all your life in the valley?" I asked an old mountaineer whom I met on the road as he was carrying on his shoulder a sack of corn to the mill.

Into his eye there came a light of playfulness, then pity, quickly to be followed by a twinkle of fun. He simply could not let the opening pass.

"Not yit," he said.

Later I saw a little fellow of six years of age chasing a chicken barren of feathers over a yard that was barren of grass. When I accused him of maliciously picking that chicken, his face was a spot of smiles as he vigorously denied it.

"Are you going to school?" I asked him.

The smile changed to a look of surprize at an inquiry so out of line with his immediate activities.

"When it starts," he called back as he and the chicken disappeared under the cabin.

I dropped questions and adopted the direct statement as a method of procedure in which there was less personal liability.

Alvin Terry, dressed in a patched corduroy with a hunting-pouch made of the skin of a gray fox and with his long rifle in his hand, stopped at the store and told how he "got a bear." There was a hunter's pride in the achievement with apparently little value given to the bravery of the personal rôle he had played.

He had been on a hunt back in the hills. His dogs had gone ahead of him and he "knowed they had somethin'." When he came in sight of them they rushed into a

cave and some came out yelping and bloody. When they wouldn't go back, then it was he "sized hit wur a bear." He looked at the mountains around him, but there was not a cabin in sight where he could get help.

"Ez the dogs couldn't git out whatever wuz in there, and wuz only keepin' hit in, I sat down to think hit over. I lowed I would tell some one en folks would say, 'that's the man who had a bear in a cave, and did not git him.' Ef I went in en come out alive with scratches on me, folks would say 'a bear done that, but he got the bear.' "

He cut a long pole, fastened a pine knot to the end of it and set it afire. Getting to the side of the mouth of the cave he began slowly to push in the burning knot, "leavin' the channel open ef anything wanted to come out."

But the bear didn't come out, and the hunter grew afraid that the smoke would

not move his prey yet would prevent him seeing around in the cave if he had to go in. The cave's mouth was low, a rock hung over it and he could not crawl upon his hands and knees.

"I pushed the pine knot ez fur ez hit would go. I set my rifle, en pushed hit ahead of me. Got my knife where I could git hit. Went down flat en begun to pull myself on my elbows. When I could jes peep around a rock I seed the bear. He wuz settin' on his haunches, his head turned a-lookin' at the pine knot. I picked out a spot about three inches below his collar-bone, en never drew such a bead on anything. Then I tetched her off. Ye should have seed me come backward out o' there."

He waited and there was no sound in the cave. He sent the dogs in and they would not come out at his call. He reloaded his rifle and began to crawl in again.

"As soon as I seed him I knowed he wuz dead. I got both hands on his paw and began to pull. He wuz heavier than I wuz, so I slid to him. I tried ketchin' my toes in the rocks, but I couldn't hold, en I never moved him."

He went ten miles over the mountains to get help to pull his bear out of the cave.

The language of the people of the Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge mountains is filled with a quaintness of expression. Many of their words and phrases that attract through their oddity were at one time in popular use and grammatically correct. These people are clinging to the dialect of their fathers who were Anglo-Saxons. The use of "hit" for "it" is not confined to the mountains, but the Old English grammars give "hit" as the neuter of the pronoun "he."

"Uns," too, had once a grammatical sanction, for "uon" or "un" was the Early En-

glish for "one," and "uns" was more than the one. In many parts of the South are found the expressions, "you-uns" and "we-uns." The mountaineer says "you-uns" when he is addressing more than one person. It is one of his plural forms for "you," and he is adopting an Early English ending. But the true mountaineer does not employ "we-uns." The "we" to him is plural, the suffix is superfluous. In the same way he says "ye" when speaking to more than one, but he uses "you" when addressing an individual. He seems, too, to make a distinction between "you-uns" and "ye." The former is usually the nominative and the latter the objective.

When he wishes to convey the idea of past tense, the ending "ed" is popularly employed, but when he may he drops the "e." While he will properly use the present tense of a verb he goes out of his way to add

the "(e)d." So he says "know-d," "see-d." But he is not always consistent. He prefers "kilt," the old form, to "killed."

Generations passed in which they had little opportunity to attend school, and there are to-day a number of the older people of the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" who can not read nor write. Some of the younger generation have been away to college, but, as with Alvin York, most of them grew to manhood with only a month or a month and a half at school during a year, with many years no school in session.

The church is in the center of the valley at the edge of a grove of forest trees. It is a frame structure, built by the Methodists during the past century. The board walls of the interior are unplastered and unpainted, and the pews are movable benches. The pulpit is slightly elevated with a railing in front, ending in two pillars upon which rest the

preacher's Bible, song books and lamps. Along the entire front of the pulpit runs the mourners' bench. In the rear of the church a ladder rests against the wall and down toward it swings a rope from the open belfry.

Every one in the valley attends church and there are but few who do not go to every service without regard to the denomination conducting it. They come on horse- and mule-back, on foot, in wagons in the beds of which are chairs for the entire family. In summer many of the men wear their overalls, and all, excepting the young men acting as escorts, come in their shirt-sleeves. Some of the women are in silks, but more of them are in ginghams, and many sunbonnets are to be seen. At the door of the church the men and women part and they sit in separate pews.

I attended a service at the end of a revival

that was being conducted by the Rev. Melvin Herbert Russell, of the Church of Christ in Christian Union, the frail and eager evangelist who three years before had brought Sergeant York to his knees before the altar of that church.

It was an August day and the sun's rays fell into the valley without a single cloud for a screen. The little church was filled with worshipers, while many sat in the shade of the trees that sheltered it, within the sound of the minister's voice. Down through the grove the hitched horses "stomped" and switched, but this was the only evidence of restlessness.

The minister conducted the services in his shirt-sleeves, without collar, and with the sleeves rolled up. There is no organ in the church and he played a guitar as he led the earnest singing.

The mountain evangelist had but few of

the pulpit arts of the minister, but he had the soul of a great preacher. His life, to him, was a mission to the unconverted to point out the imminence of death and its meaning. His belief had carried him beyond and above the pleading of the uncertainty of death to arouse fear in the hearts of his congregation. Instead, to him, the great clock of time was actually ticking off an opportunity which the unconverted could not permit to pass. In his earnest pleading his voice would rise from a conversational tone until it rang penetratingly through the hall, and he would emphasize his words with a startling resound from his open palm upon the altar-rail.

The mountaineers had brought their entire families, and during the service the smaller children would fall asleep, to awaken with a cry at the changing vibrations. Up and down the sounding, carpet-

less aisles the parents would pass, carrying out some child to comfort it.

But the incidents were unnoticed by the minister, nor did they break the chant of amens or the growing number of repetitions of the minister's words by the devout worshipers. When the eyes of the auditors were turned from the evangelist they reverently sought the face of some expected convert. In the service, in the feelings of the people there was real religion.

Sundays pass when there is no preaching in the church. Pastor Pile, the local minister, has several charges and can conduct the services at Pall Mall but once a month. But each Sunday morning there is Sunday School, and in the afternoon a singing-class. Some one of the York boys leads the unaccompanied songs, and Alvin's leadership and interest in these services caused the catchy phrase, "a singing Elder," to be a

part of nearly every newspaper story of him that went over the country.

The singing-class draws to the church on Sunday afternoon the younger element of the community. When the service is over, some go for a swim in the Wolf River which runs along the foot of the grove, or on a grassless space under a giant oak on the schoolhouse-yard there will be a game of marbles. It is the old-fashioned "ring men" that they play, where five large marbles are placed in a small square marked in the dust, one marble on each corner and one in the middle.

Over in France when the officers of Sergeant York's regiment were trying to obtain all the facts of his wonderful exploit, they asked him what he did with the German officers he had captured when he started to bring in his line of prisoners. His reply was a simile from his boyhood in the mountains:

"I jes made a middler out of myself."

Among all the American officers present there was but one who recognized his reference to the old marble game.

The death of his father when Alvin was twenty-one, relaxed a hand that had protected and guided him more than he realized. His two older brothers were married and he became the head of the family of ten that remained. He left to his younger brothers the care of the crops upon the farm and he hired out on any job that brought an extra revenue. In summer he worked on neighboring farms, and in winter hauled staves and merchandise when the roads could be traveled, or logged in the lumber camps.

He formed new associates and under the new influences began to drink and gamble. With his companions on Saturday and Sunday he would "go to the Kentucky line."

Through the mountains along the state-line between Tennessee and Kentucky there were road-houses, or saloons, that were so built that one-half of the house would be in Kentucky and one-half in Tennessee. The keeper paid his federal license and was free from the clutches of the United States Government. But he avoided the licenses of the states by carrying a customer from Tennessee into the Kentucky side of the house for the business transaction, and the Kentuckian was invited into Tennessee. No customer of the state-line saloons could swear before a grand jury that he had violated the liquor laws of his state, and he was not subject to a summons at his home by the grand jury of the county or state in which he made his purchase. Upon receipt of a "grapevine" signal that officers were approaching, the entire stock of liquids would disappear and when the officers ar-

rived the saloonkeeper would be at work in the fields of his farm.

The nearest state-line saloon to Pall Mall was seven miles by the road and but little over half the distance by paths on the mountains.

This was the only period of Alvin's life when the wishes of his mother did not control him. These week-end sprees were relaxation and fun, and he worked steadily the remainder of the week. In them he grew jovial and the friends he drew around him were fun, not trouble, makers. His physical strength and the influence of his personality were quickly used to check in incipiency any evidence of approaching disorder.

His "shooting-up" consisted of pumping lead from an old revolver he owned into the spots on beech trees as he and his friends galloped along the road. And he became so expert that he would pass the revolver from

hand to hand and empty it against a tree as he went by. When the eight Germans charged him in the fight in the Argonne, he never raised his automatic pistol higher than his cartridge-belt.

His mother knew the latent determination of her boy and she was ever in dread that there might arise some trouble among the men when he was away on these drinking trips.

"Alvin is jes like his father," she said. "They were both slow to start trouble, but ef either one would git into hit, they'd go through with the job and there'd be a-hurtin'."

But since the fist fights of boyhood Alvin York has never had a personal encounter. His intents and deeds do not lead him into difficulties, and in his eye there is a calm blue light that steadies the impulses of men given to explosions of passion and anger.

At a basket-dinner where he and his friends were drinking he took his last drink. To these outings the girls bring, in a woven, hickory basket, a dinner for two. The baskets are auctioned, the proceeds are given to some church charity, and the purchaser and the girl have dinner together. They are often expensive parties to a serious-minded mountain swain who can not surrender the day's privileges to a rival or will not yield his dignity and rights to fun-makers who enliven the biddings by making the basket, brought by "his girl," cost at least as much as a marriage license.

Alvin's mother had often pleaded with her boy that he was not his real self—not his better self—while drinking. Something happened at a basket-party in 1914 that caused the full meaning of his mother's solicitude to come to him. He left, declaring he would never take another drink,

and his drinking and gambling days ended together.

Late in the afternoons in the fall months, when the squirrels are out [so the story runs in the valley, but without confirmation from the Sergeant], Alvin would be seen leaving home with his gun. He would cut across the fields to the west and pass along the outskirts of the farm of Squire F. A. Williams. Those who saw him wondered why he should take this long course to the woods, while on the mountain above his home the oak and beech masts were plentiful and other hunters were going there for the squirrels.

About this same time, the wife of Squire Williams noted with pleasure that Gracie, her youngest daughter—a girl of sixteen with golden hair and eyes that mirror the blue of the sky—went willingly to the

woodlots for the cows. When she returned with them she was singing, and this, too, pleased Mrs. Williams.

The road from Squire Williams' home to the church passes the York home; and, after the service, as far as his gate, Alvin would often walk with them. As Gracie was silent and timid when any stranger was near, so diffident that when on their way home from church she walked far away from Alvin, the neighbors for a long while had no explanation for Alvin's squirrel-hunts along the base of the mountain instead of up toward the top of it; and Mrs. Williams, at her home, heard so many gunshots off in the woods in the course of a day that she attached no significance to them.

But Alvin's and Gracie's meetings along the shaded roadway that leads to the Williams home were discovered, and Mrs. Williams put a ban upon them—for Gracie

was too young, she maintained, to have thoughts of marriage.

The real facts in that mountain courtship are known to but two, and even now are as carefully guarded as tho the romance had not become a reality and culminated happily.

But the neighbors have fragments out of which they build a story, and it varies with the imagination of the relator. The big Sergeant's confirmation or denial is a smile and a playful, taunting silence that leaves conclusion in doubt.

There is a path that leads from the store around the side of the mountain that edges a shoulder between the store and the Williams home. A little off this path is a large flat rock. Around it massive beech trees grow and their boughs arch into a dome above the rock. There are carvings on the trunks of those trees that were not found

until the rock was selected as the altar for a woodland wedding at which the Governor of Tennessee officiated.

When Gracie would come to the store she passed the York home on her way. Often, when alone, she would return by the mountain path. It was longer than by the road, but it was shaded by trees, and as it bends around the mountain glimpses of the valley could be seen. The rock ledge among the beech trees was not half way to her home, but it was a picturesque place to rest, and down below was the roof of the York home and the spring-branch, as it wound its way to the Wolf River. It was their favorite meeting-place.

When the war broke in Europe, those who lived in the valley gave little heed to it. When there was talk of the United States' entry, there was deep opposition. They

were opposed to any war. The wounds of the Civil War had healed, but the scars it left were deep. The thought of another armed conflict meant more to the old people than it did to the younger generation.

"I did not know," Alvin said of himself, "why we were going to war. We never had any speakings in here, and I did not read the papers closely, and did not know the objects of the war. I did not feel I wanted to go."

He had given up his work on the farm and was making more money than he had ever made before. The shortcut of the Dixie Highway—that part that runs from Louisville to Chattanooga—had been surveyed and was being graded through Fentress county. It runs through the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf." He was "driving steel on the pike," for his days in the blacksmith shop had taught him to wield a sledge-hammer and many rocks were to be blasted

to make a roadway. For this he was receiving $1.65 a day, for ten hours' work, while on the farm he had not been able to earn more than $25 a month, working from "can't see to can't see."

When he joined the church he had given himself to it unreservedly. They were holding many meetings and the church was growing. He had become the Second Elder. At the time, too, he was planning for the day when he could marry.

In June following the country's entry into the war Alvin registered for the draft and in October at Jamestown took his examination.

"They looked at me, they weighed me," he told on his return, "and I weighed 170 pounds and was 72 inches tall. So they said I passed all right!"

He was with Pastor Pile, and he turned to him:

"This means good-bye for me. But I'll go."

After his registration his mother had never ceased to worry over his going to a war so far away from her.

The situation troubled him. At times he would see his mother looking steadily at him, and there was always a sadness in her face. He knew that she needed him, for the next oldest of the brothers of those who were at home was only seventeen. But his country had asked him to stand by and would call him if it needed him.

The struggle within him lasted for weeks. Then he asked that they seek no exemption for him.

In his presence his mother never again referred to his going, but he would see her troubled face watching him.

But she talked with the influential men in the valley hoping there would be some sug-

gestion that would honorably relieve Alvin from the duty of going. Pastor Pile had gone ahead to see what he could do, and he learned that those who were "conscientious objectors" would not have to go. The tenets of his church, he held, were against all wars. Alvin was an elder; he had subscribed to and was living the principles of his religion. He hurried home to Mrs. York.

But the soldier, himself, had to make the plea for exemption, no one could make it for him.

Alvin never made it.

In the middle of November his summons reached him. He had but twenty-four hours to respond.

He sent a note to Gracie, telling her his "little blue card" had come and he asked her to meet him at the church—which always stands open by the roadside. As they walked toward her home they arranged to

meet the next morning at the rock under the beech trees, when she would leave to carry the cows to the pasture. And it was there she promised to marry him—when he returned from the war.

Men at the store saw Alvin come down from the mountain and he could not escape some banterings over the success or failure of his early morning tryst.

"Jes left it to her," he is said to have frankly confessed, "she can have me for the takin' when I git back."

He and his mother were alone in their home for several hours. When he left he stopped at the Brooks' porch where relatives and neighbors had assembled. As he walked away he turned, unexpectedly, up the path toward the rock on the mountainside. It is now known he went there to kneel alone in prayer.

When he came down to the store, to the

men waiting for him, he spoke with an assured faith he had not shown before.

"I know, now, that I'll be back," he told them.

His mother, weeping, tho hiding it from him, had slowly followed as far as the Brooks' porch.

Alvin, looking back toward the old Coonrod Pile home, saw her and waved to her, then hurried to the buggy that was to take him to Jamestown.

As the grating of the moving buggy wheels on the road reached the Brooks porch, Mrs. York gave a cry that went to responsive hearts in every home in that part of the valley. And she secluded herself, and sobbed for days.

VI

SERGEANT YORK'S OWN STORY

VI

Sergeant York's Own Story

WHEN Alvin went to war he carried with him a small, red, cloth-covered memorandum book, which was to be his diary. He knew that beyond the mountains that encircled his home there was a world that would be new to him. He kept the little volume—now with broken-back and worn—constantly with him, and he wrote in it while in camp, on shipboard and in the trenches in France. It was in his pocket while he fought the German machine gun battalion in the Forest of Argonne.

The book with its records was intended for no eyes but his own. Yet painstaking, using ink, he had headed the volume: "A History of places where I have been."

As a whole, the volume would be unintelligible to a reader, for while it records the things he wished to remember of his camp-life, the trip through England, his stay in France, and tells in order the "places he had been," it is made up of swift-moving notes that enter into no explanatory details. But to him the notations could—even in the evening of his life—revive the chain of incidents in memory. His handling of his diary is typical of his mind and his methods.

To him details are essential, but when they are done carefully and thoroughly their functions are performed and thereafter they are uninteresting. They are but the steps that must be taken to walk a given distance. His mind instead dwells upon the object of the walk.

When he left his home at Pall Mall he reported to the local recruiting station at Jamestown, the county seat. He was sent

to Camp Gordon near Atlanta, Ga., and reached there the night of November 16, 1917. His diary runs:

"I was placed in the 21st training battalion. Then I was called the first morning of my army life to police up in the yard all the old cigarette butts and I thought that was pretty hard as I didn't smoke. But I did it just the same."

His history tells in one sentence, of months of his experience in training with the "awkward squad" and of his regimental assignment:

"I stayed there and done squads right and squads left until the first of February, 1918, and then I was sent to Company G, 328 Inf. 82nd Div."

This was the "All America" Division, made up of selected men from every state in the Union and in its ranks were the descendants of men who came from every

nation that composed the Allies that were fighting Germany.

In his notes Alvin records temptations that came to him while at Camp Gordon:

"Well they gave me a gun and, oh my! that old gun was just full of grease, and I had to clean that old gun for inspection. So I had a hard time to get that old gun clean, and oh, those were trying hours for a boy like me trying to live for God and do his blessed will. . . . Then the Lord would help me to bear my hard tasks.

"So there I was. I was the homesickest boy you ever seen."

When he entered the army Alvin York stood six feet in the clear. There were but few in camp physically his equal. In any crowd of men he drew attention. The huge muscles of his body glided lithely over each other. He had been swinging with long, firm strides up the mountainsides. His arms

and shoulders had developed by lifting hay-ladened pitchforks in the fields and in the swing of the sledge in his father's blacksmith's shop. The military training coordinated these muscles and he moved among the men a commanding figure, whose quiet reserve power seemed never fully called into action by the arduous duties of the soldier.

The strength of his mind, the brain force he possessed were yet to be recognized and tested. And even to-day, with all the experiences he has had and the advancement he has made, that force is not yet measured. It is in the years of the future that the real mission of Sergeant York will be told.

He came out of the mountains of Tennessee with an education equal to that of a child of eight or nine years of age, with no experience in the world beyond the primitive, wholesome life of his mountain community, with but little knowledge of the lives and

customs, the ambitions and struggles of men who lived over the summit of the Blue Ridge and beyond the foot-hills of the Cumberlands.

But he was wise enough to know there were many things he did not know. He was brave enough to frankly admit them. When placed in a situation that was new to him, he would try quietly to think his way out of it; and through inheritance and training he thought calmly. He had the mental power to stand at ease under any condition and await sufficient developments to justify him to speak or act. Even German bullets could not hurry nor disconcert him.

He was keenly observant of all that went on around him in the training-camp. Few sounds or motions escaped him, though it was in a seemingly stoic mien that he contemplated the things that were new to him. In the presence of those whose knowledge or

training he recognized as superior to his own he calmly waited for them to act, and so accurate were his observations that the officers of his regiment looked upon him as one by nature a soldier, and they said of him that he "always seemed instinctively to know the right thing to do."

Placed at his first banquet board—the guest of honor—with a row of silver by his plate so different from the table service in his humble home, he did not misuse a piece from among them or select one in error. But throughout the courses he was not the first to pick up a needed piece.

His ability to think clearly and quickly, under conditions that tried both heart and brain, was shown in the fight in the Argonne. With eight men, not twenty yards away, charging him with bayonets, he calmly decided to shoot the last man first, and to continue this policy in selecting his mark, so

that those remaining would "not see their comrades falling and in panic stop and fire a volley at him."

Military critics analyzing the tactics York used in this fight have been able to find no superior way for removing the menace of the German machine guns that were over the crest of the hill and between him and his regiment, than to form the prisoners he had captured in a column, put the officers in front and march directly to each machine gun-nest, compelling the German officers to order the gunners to surrender and to take their place in line.

Calm and self-controlled, with hair of copper-red and face and neck browned and furrowed by the sun and mountain winds, enured to hardships and ready for them, this young mountaineer moved among his new-found companions at Camp Gordon. Reticent he seemed, but his answer to an in-

quiry was direct, and his quiet blue-eyes never shifted from the eyes of the man who addressed him. As friendships were formed, his moods were noted by his comrades. At times he was playful as a boy, using cautiously, even gently, the strength he possessed. Then again he would remain, in the midst of the sports, thoughtful, and as tho he were troubled.

Back in the mountains he had but little opportunity to attend school, and his sentences were framed in the quaint construction of his people, and nearly all of them were ungrammatical. There were many who would have regarded him as ignorant. By the standards that hold that education is enlightenment that comes from acquaintance with books and that wisdom is a knowledge of the ways of the world, he was. But he had a training that is rare; advantages that come to too few.

From his father he inherited physical courage; from his mother, moral courage. And both of them spent their lives developing these qualities of manhood in their boy. His father hiked him through the mountains on hunts that would have stoutened the heart of any man to have kept the pace. And he never tolerated the least evidence of fear of man or beast. He taught his boy to so live that he owed apology or explanation to no man.

While I was at Pall Mall, one of his neighbors, speaking of Alvin, said:

"Even as a boy he had his say and did his do, and never stopped to explain a statement or tell what prompted an act. Left those to stand for themselves."

And the little mother, whose frail body was worn from hard work and wracked by the birth of eleven children, was before him the embodiment of gentleness, spirit and

faith. When he came from the hunt into the door of that cabin home and hung his gun above the mantel, or came in from the fields where the work was physical, he put from him all feeling of the possession of strength. When he was with her, he was as gentle as the mother herself.

She, too, wanted her son to live in such a way that he would not fear any man. But she wanted his course through life to be over the path her Bible pointed out, so that he would not have the impulse to do those deeds that called for explanation or demanded apology.

From her he inherited those qualities of mind that gave him at all times the full possession of himself. Her simple, home-made philosophy was ever urging her boy to "think clear through" whatever proposition was before him, and when in a situation where those around him were excited "to

slow down on what he was doing, and think fast." I have heard her say:

"There hain't no good in gitting excited; you can't do what you ought to do."

She had not seen a railroad-train until she went to the capital of Tennessee to the presentation of the medal of honor given her son by the people of the state. She came upon the platform of the Tabernacle at Nashville wearing the sunbonnet of stays she wore to church in the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf." The Governor in greeting her, lifted off the sunbonnet. His possession was momentary, for Mrs. York recaptured it in true York style. Her smiling face and nodding head told that the Governor had capitulated. It was pantomime, for the thousands were on their feet waving to her and cheering her. Calm and still smiling, she looked over the demonstration in the vast auditorium more as a spec-

tator than as the cause of the outburst of applause. Later, at the reception at the Governor's mansion, guests gathered around her and she held a levee that crowded one of the big drawing-rooms. Those who sought to measure wit with her found her never at a loss for a reply, and woven through her responses were many similes drawn from her mountain life.

Under her proctorship the moral courage of her son had developed. In her code of manhood there was no tolerance for infirmity of purpose, and mental fear was as degrading and as disintegrating as physical cowardice. He had been a man of the world in the miniature world that the miles of mountains had enclosed around him. He had lived every phase of the life of his people, and lived them openly. When he renounced drinking and gambling he was through with them for all time. When he

joined the church, his religion was made the large part of the new plan of his life.

It was while at Camp Gordon that he reconciled his religious convictions with his patriotic duty to his country.

The rugged manhood within him had made him refuse to ask exemption from service and danger on the ground that the doctrine of his church opposed war. But his conscience was troubled that he was deliberately on the mission to kill his fellow man. It was these thoughts that caused his companions to note his moody silences.

In behalf of his mother, who, with many mothers of the land, was bravely trying to still her heart with the thought that her son was on an errand of mercy, the pastor of the church in the valley made out the strongest case he could for Alvin's exemption, and sent it to the officers of his regiment.

Lieut. Col. Edward Buxton, Jr., and Maj.

E. C. B. Danford, who was then the captain of York's company, sent for him. They explained the conditions under which it were possible, if he chose, to secure exemption. They pointed out the way he could remain in the service of his country and not be among the combat troops. The sincerity, the earnestness of York impressed the officers, and they had not one but a number of talks in which the Scriptures were quoted to show the Savior's teachings "when man seeth the sword come upon the land." They brought out many facts about the war that the Tennessee mountaineer had not known.

York did not take the release that lay within his grasp. Instead, he thumbed his Bible in search of passages that justified the use of force.

One day, before the regiment sailed for France, when York's company was leaving the drill-field, Capt. Danford sent for him.

Together they went over many passages of the Bible which both had found.

"If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

They were together several hours. At last York said:

"All right; I'm satisfied."

After that there was no reference to religious objection. From the first he had seen the justice of the war. He now saw the righteousness of it.

York's abilities as a soldier were soon revealed. He quickly qualified as a sharpshooter, both as skirmisher and from the top of the trench. In battalion contest formation, where the soldiers run and fall and fire, "shooting at moving targets," it was not difficult for him to score eight hits out of ten shots, and, with a rifle that was new to him. This, too, over a range that began at 600 yards and went down to 100 yards, with

the targets in the shape of the head and shoulders of a man. In these maneuvers he attracted the attention of his officers.

The impressive figure of the man with its ever present evidence of reserve force, the strength of his personality, uneducated as he was, made him a natural leader of the men around him. Officers of the regiment have said that he would have received a promotion while in the training-camp but for the policy of not placing in command a man who might be a conscientious objector.

The "All America" Division passed through England on its way to France and the first real fighting they had was in the St. Mihiel Salient. From there they went to the Argonne Forest, where the division was on the front line of the battle for twenty-six days and nights without relief.

It was in the St. Mihiel Salient that York was made a Corporal, and when he

came out of the Argonne Forest he was a Sergeant. The armistice was signed a fortnight later.

The war made York more deeply religious. The diary he kept passed from simple notations about "places he had been" to a record of his thoughts and feelings. In it are many quotations from the Bible; many texts of sermons he heard while on the battlefields of France. With the texts were brief notes that would recall the sermons to his memory. The book is really "a history" of his religious development.

When he would kneel by a dying soldier he would record in his diary the talk he had with his comrade and would write the passages of Scripture that he or the dying man had spoken. It was upon this his interests centered. To others he left the task of telling of the battle's result.

He wrote in his diary this simple story

of his fight with the battalion of German machine guns:

"On the 7th day of October we lay in some little holes on the roadside all day. That night we went out and stayed a little while and came back to our holes, the shells bursting all around us. I saw men just blown up by the big German shells which were bursting all around us.

"So the order came for us to take Hill 223 and 240 the 8th.

"So the morning of the 8th just before daylight, we started for the hill at Chatel Chehery. Before we got there it got light and the Germans sent over a heavy barrage and also gas and we put on our gas-masks and just pressed right on through those shells and got to the top of Hill 223 to where we were to start over at 6:10 A.M.

"They were to give us a barrage. The

time came and no barrage, and we had to go without one. So we started over the top at 6:10 A.M. and the Germans were putting their machine guns to working all over the hill in front of us and on our left and right. I was in support and I could see my pals getting picked off until it almost looked like there was none left.

"So 17 of us boys went around on the left flank to see if we couldn't put those guns out of action.

"So when we went around and fell in behind those guns we first saw two Germans with Red Cross band on their arms.

"Some one of the boys shot at them and they ran back to our right.

"So we all ran after them, and when we jumped across a little stream of water that was there, there was about 15 or 20 Germans jumped up and threw up their hands and said, 'Comrade.' The one in charge of us

boys told us not to shoot, they were going to give up anyway.

"By this time the Germans from on the hill was shooting at me. Well I was giving them the best I had.

"The Germans had got their machine guns turned around.

"They killed 6 and wounded 3. That just left 8 and then we got into it right. So we had a hard battle for a little while.

"I got hold of a German major and he told me if I wouldn't kill any more of them he would make them quit firing.

"So I told him all right. If he would do it now.

"So he blew a little whistle and they quit shooting and came down and gave up. I had about 80 or 90 Germans there.

"They disarmed and we had another line of Germans to go through to get out. So I called for my men and one answered me

from behind a big oak tree and the other men were on my right in the brush.

"So I said, 'Let's get these Germans out of here.' One of my men said, 'It's impossible.' So I said, 'No, let's get them out of here.'

"When my men said that this German major said, 'How many have you got?'

"And I said, 'I got a plenty,' and pointed my pistol at him all the time.

"In this battle I was using a rifle or a 45 Colt automatic pistol.

"So I lined the Germans up in a line of twos and I got between the ones in front and I had the German major before me. So I marched them right straight into those other machine guns, and I got them. When I got back to my Major's P. C. I had 132 prisoners.

"So you can see here in this case of mine where God helped me out. I had been liv-

ing for God and working in church work sometime before I came to the army. I am a witness to the fact that God did help me out of that hard battle for the bushes were shot off all around me and I never got a scrach.

"So you can see that God will be with you if you will only trust Him, and I say He did save me."

"By this time," he wrote, "the Germans from on the hill was shooting at me. Well, I was giving them the best I had."

That best was the courage to stand his ground and fight it out with them, regardless of their number, for they were the defilers of civilization, murderers of men, the enemies of fair play who had shown no quarter to his pals who were slain unwarned while in the act of granting mercy to men in their power.

That best was the morale of the soldier who believes that justice is on his side and that the justness of God will shield him from harm.

And in physical qualities, it included a heart that was stout and a brain that was clear—a mind that did not weaken when all the hilltop above flashed in a hostile blaze, when the hillside rattled with the death drum-beat of machine gun-fire and while the very air around him was filled with darting lead. As he fought, his mind visualized the tactics of the enemy in the moves they made, and whether the attack upon him was with rifle or machine gun, hand-grenade or bayonet, he met it with an unfailing marksmanship that equalized the disparity in numbers.

Another passage in his direct and simple story shows the character of this man who came from a distant recess of the mountains

with no code of ethics except a confidence in his fellow man.

Those of the Americans who were not killed or wounded in the first machine gun-fire had saved themselves as York had done. They had dived into the brush and lay flat upon the ground, behind trees, among the prisoners, protected by any obstruction they could find, and the stream of bullets passed over them.

York was at the left, beyond the edge of the thicket. The others were shut off by the underbrush from a view of the German machine guns that were firing on them. York had the open of the slope of the hill, and it fell to him to fight the fight. He wrote in his diary when he could find time, and the story was written in "fox-holes" in the Forest of Argonne, in the evenings after the American soldiers had dug in. Tho his records were for no one but himself, he had no

thought that raised his performance of duty above that of his comrades:

"They killed 6 and wounded 3. That just left 8 and we got into it right. So we had a hard battle for a little while."

Yet, in the height of the fight, not a shot was fired but by York.

In their admiration for him and his remarkable achievement, so that the honor should rest where it belonged, the members of the American patrol who were the survivors of the fight made affidavits that accounted for all of them who were not killed or wounded, and showed the part each took. These affidavits are among the records of Lieut. Col. G. Edward Buxton, Jr., Official Historian of the Eighty-Second Division. At the time of the fight Sergeant York was still a Corporal.

From the affidavit by Private Patrick Donohue:

"During the shooting, I was guarding the mass of Germans taken prisoners and devoted my attention to watching them. When we first came in on the Germans, I fired a shot at them before they surrendered. Afterwards I was busy guarding the prisoners and did not shoot. I could only see Privates Wills, Sacina and Sok. They were also guarding prisoners as I was doing."

From the affidavit by Private Michael A. Sacina:

"I was guarding the prisoners with my rifle and bayonet on the right flank of the group of prisoners. I was so close to these prisoners that the machine gunners could not shoot at me without hitting their own men. This I think saved me from being hit. During the firing, I remained on guard watching these prisoners and unable to turn around and fire myself for this reason. I could not see any of the other men in my detachment. From this point I saw the German captain and had aimed my rifle at him when he blew his whistle for the Germans to stop firing. I saw Corporal York, who called out to us, and when we all joined him, I saw seven Americans beside myself. These were Corp. York, Privates Beardsley, Donohue, Wills, Sok, Johnson and Konotski."

From the affidavit by Private Percy Beardsley:

"I was at first near Corp. York, but soon after thought it would be better to take to cover behind a

large tree about fifteen paces in rear of Corp. York. Privates Dymowski and Waring were on each side of me and both were killed by machine gun-fire. I saw Corp. York fire his pistol repeatedly in front of me. I saw Germans who had been hit fall down. I saw the German prisoners who were still in a bunch together waving their hands at the machine gunners on the hill as if motioning for them to go back. Finally the fire stopped and Corp. York told me to have the prisoners fall in columns of two's and take my place in the rear."

From the affidavit by Private George W. Wills:

"When the heavy firing from the machine guns commenced, I was guarding some of the German prisoners. During this time I saw only Privates Donohue, Sacina, Beardsley and Muzzi. Private Swanson was right near me when he was shot. I closed up very close to the Germans with my bayonet on my rifle and prevented some of them who tried to leave the bunch and get into the bushes from leaving. I knew my only chance was to keep them together and also keep them between me and the Germans who were shooting. I heard Corp. York several times shouting to the machine gunners on the hill to come down and surrender, but from where I stood I could not see Corp. York. I saw him, however, when the firing stopped and he told us to get along sides of the column. I formed those near me in columns of two's."

The report which the officers of the Eighty-Second Division made to General Headquarters contained these statements:

"The part which Corporal York individually played in this attack (the capture of the Décauville Railroad) is difficult to estimate. Practically unassisted, he captured 132 Germans (three of whom were officers), took about 35 machine guns and killed no less than 25 of the enemy, later found by others on the scene of York's extraordinary exploit.

"The story has been carefully checked in every possible detail from Headquarters of this Division and is entirely substantiated.

"Altho Corporal York's statement tends to underestimate the desperate odds which he overcame, it has been decided to forward to higher authority the account given in his own words.

"The success of this assault had a far-

reaching effect in relieving the enemy pressure against American forces in the heart of the Argonne Forest."

In decorating Sergeant York with the Croix de Guerre with Palm, Marshal Foch said to him:

"What you did was the greatest thing accomplished by any private soldier of all of the armies of Europe."

When the officers of York's regiment were securing the facts for their report to General Headquarters and were recording the stories of the survivors, York was questioned on his efforts to escape the onslaught of the machine guns:

"By this time, those of my men who were left had gotten behind trees, and the men sniped at the Boche. But there wasn't any tree for me, so I just sat in the mud and

used my rifle, shooting at the machine gunners."

The officers recall his quaint and memorable answer to the inquiry on the tactics he used to defend himself against the Boche who were in the gun-pits, shooting at him from behind trees and crawling for him through the brush. His method was simple and effective:

"When I seed a German, I jes' tetched him off."

In the afternoon of October 8—York had brought in his prisoners by 10 o'clock in the morning—in the seventeenth hour of that day, the Eighty-Second Division cut the Decauville Railroad and drove the Germans from it. The pressure against the American forces in the heart of the Argonne Forest was not only relieved, but the advance of the division had aided in the relief of the "Lost Battalion" under the command of the

late Col. Whittlesey, which had made its stand in another hollow of those hills only a short distance from the hillside where Sergeant York made his fight.

As the Eighty-Second Division swept up the three hills across the valley from Hill No. 223, the hill on the left—York's Hill—was found cleared of the enemy and there was only the wreckage of the battle that had been fought there.

York's fight occurred on the eighth day of the twenty-eight day and night battle of the Eighty-Second Division in the Argonne. They were in the forest fighting on, when the story went over the world that an American soldier had fought and captured a battalion of German machine gunners.

Even military men doubted its possibility, until the "All America" Division came out of the forest with the records they had made upon the scene, and with the clear exposi-

tion of the tactics and the remarkable bravery and generalship that made Sergeant York's achievement possible.

Alvin York faced a new experience. He found himself famous.

VII

TWO MORE DEEDS OF DISTINCTION

VII

Two More Deeds of Distinction

ALVIN was not prepared for the ovations that awaited him. The world gives generously to those who succeed in an extraordinary endeavor where the resource and ability of men are in competition. For intellectual achievement there is deference and wonder, for moral accomplishment there is approbation and love, but for physical courage there are all of these and an added admiration that bursts in such fervor of approval that men shout and toss their caps in air. It has been true, since the world began.

The first honors came to him from his soldier associates. Then the men of other regiments, and the regiments of other nations, wanted to see the American who

single-handed had fought and forced a battalion of machine gunners to come to him. The people of France, too, were calling for him.

It was with a military yardstick the soldiers measured the deed, for they knew the fighting competency of a single machine gun and had seen the destructive power of the scythe-like sweep of a battalion of them. The civilian, in doubt and wonder, realized the magnitude of the achievement in visualizing the number of prisoners that had surrendered to one man.

The only contact Alvin York had had to the rôle of a man of prominence was to stand in line, at attention, as persons of importance passed before him. But when his regiment came out of the Argonne Forest, where its almost unbroken battle had lasted twenty-eight days, he was taken from the line and passed in review before the soldiers

of other regiments. Under orders from headquarters of the American Expeditionary Force he traveled through the war zone. As a guest of honor he was sent to cities in southern France. In Paris he was received with impressive ceremonies by President Poincaré and the government officials. It was during this period that many of the military awards were made to him, and brigade reviews were selected as the occasions for his decoration.

Against this background of enthusiasm, the tall, reserved, silent mountaineer, in natural repose, moved through the varying programs of a day. As all was new to him, he complied with almost childlike docility to the demands upon him, but he was ever watchful that his conduct should conform to that of those around him. If called upon to speak, he responded; and he stood before the cheering crowds in noticeable mental con-

trol. The few words he used did not misfire nor jam. They ended in a smile of real fellowship that beamed from a rugged face that was furrowed and tanned, and always with the quaint mountain phrase of appreciation, "I thank ye!" In the months he remained with the army in France he grew in personal popularity from his unaffected bearing.

The letters written home to his mother during this period show him basically unchanged.

These letters, usually two a week, were the same as those he had been writing all the while. In them were but few references to himself. Even in the privacy of his correspondence with his home, there was not a boastful thought over a thing that he had done, and only the vaguest reference to the homage paid to him, as tho it were all a part of a soldier's life. It was only through

others that the mother learned of the honors given to her son in France.

At the beginning of each letter he quieted his mother's forebodings for him, and he turned to inquiries about home. Out of his pay of $30 a month as a private soldier he had assigned $25 of it to his mother. He wanted to know that the remittances had reached her. Two brothers had married and moved away. Henry, the eldest, was living in Idaho, and Albert in Kentucky. He wanted news of them. Two other married brothers, Joe and Sam, while still living in the valley, were not at the old home. He wanted every detail about their crops that told of their welfare.

His most valuable personal possession was two mules. Were George and Jim and Robert, the younger brothers, keeping those mules fat? How much of the farm were they preparing to "put in corn"? Corn was

sure to be scarce and would be worth $2.50 by harvest time! Was Mrs. Embry Wright, his only married sister, staying with his mother to comfort her? Were Lilly and Lucy, his little sisters, still helping her with the hard work—of course they were! And in every letter there was an inquiry about the sweetheart he had left behind.

The mother, when each letter had been read, placed it upright on the board shelf which was the mantel of the family fireplace. When a new letter came she took down the old one and put it carefully away. So there was always "some news from Alvin" which was accessible to all the neighbors.

"Will" Wright, president of the Bank of Jamestown, received the first printed story that gave any description of the fight Alvin had "put up" in the Forest of Argonne, and Mr. Wright hurried to Mrs. York with it. With the family gathered around her in that

hut in the mountains, and with tears running down her expectant face, she learned for the first time what her boy had done. She made Mr. Wright read the story—not once, but seven times.

America was ready for Sergeant York when among the returning soldiers his troop-ship touched port—the harbor of New York in May, 1919. The story of the man had run ahead—his fight in the forest, that had added to the cubic stature of the American soldier; the artlessness of his life and the genuineness of his character, which as yet showed no alloy; the modest, becoming acceptance of illustrious honors paid to him in France. The people saw in this simple, earnest mountaineer the type of American that had made America. They thought of him as coming from that stratum of clay that could be molded into a rail-splitter and, when the need arose, remodeled into the nation's

leader. And quickly and unexpectedly, Sergeant York was destined to show by two other deeds, prompted by an inborn eminence, that the esteem was not misplaced.

In New York and Washington there were receptions and banquets in his honor, and around him gathered high officials of the army and navy and the Government, and men who were leaders in civilian life. It was with impetuous enthusiasm that the people crowded the sidewalks to greet him as he passed along the streets—the worn service uniform, the color of his hair, the calm face that showed exposure to stress and hardships, set in the luxurious leathers of an automobile, surrounded by men so different in personal attire and appearance, marked him as the man they sought. There is something in the man that creates the desire in others to express outwardly their approval of him. At the New York Stock Exchange

business was suspended as the members rode him upon their shoulders over the floor of the Exchange where visitors are not allowed. In Washington the House of Representatives stopped debate and the members arose and cheered him when he appeared in the gallery.

There were ovations for him at the railroad stations along his way to Fort Oglethorpe, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was mustered out of service.

And in the midst of all of these mental-distracting demonstrations Alvin York was put to the test. He was offered a contract that guaranteed him $75,000 to appear in a moving picture play that would be staged in the Argonne in France and would tell the story of his mountain life. There was another proposition of $50,000. There were offers of vaudeville and theatrical engagements that ranged up to $1,000 a week,

and totaled many thousands. On these his decision was reached on the instant they were offered. The theater was condemned by the tenets of his church, and all through his youth the ministers of the gospel, whom he had heard, preached against it. The theater in any form was, as he saw it, against the principles of religion to which he had made avowal.

Then up to the surface among those who were crowding around him there wormed men who saw in Sergeant York's popularity the opportunity for them to make money for themselves. Some of the propositions that were made to him were sound, some whimsical, others strangely balanced upon a business idea—but back of all of them ran the same motive. The past in Sergeant York's life had been filled with hard work and hardships, the present was new, the future uncharted, but to him there was something

in the voices of the people who were acclaiming him that was not for sale.

When he left Fort Oglethorpe for his home, the people of his mountain country, in automobiles, on horseback, upon mules, whole families riding in chairs in the beds of farm wagons, met him along the roadway as he traveled the forty-eight miles over the mountains from the railroad station to Pall Mall, and they formed a procession as they wound their way toward the valley.

Only a few months before, when Alvin had returned home on a furlough which he secured while in training at Camp Gordon, he had "picked up" a wagon ride over the thirty-six miles from the railroad station to Jamestown, and had walked the twelve miles from "Jimtown" to Pall Mall, carrying his grip.

His mother was among those who met him at Jamestown. They rode together,

and the last of the long shadows had faded from the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" when they reached their cabin home.

The next morning, while it was not yet noon, the Sergeant and Miss Gracie Williams met on "the big road" near the Rains' store. Those sitting on the store porch—and there was to be but little work done on the farms that day—saw the two meet, bow and pass on. Pall Mall is but little given to gossip. Yet there was a strange story to be carried back to the woman-folk in the homes in the valley and on the mountainsides.

Only the foxhound, that moved slowly behind his newly returned master, knew of an earlier meeting that day between Sergeant York and his sweetheart, and of a walk down a tree-shaded path that had given the hound time to explore every fence-rail cor-

ner and verify his belief that nothing worth while had been along that road for days.

But a quiet, uneventful life in the valley was not to return to Sergeant York.

The Sunday following was Tennessee's Decoration Day. From the mountains for miles around the people came to Pall Mall. During the ceremonies, while the flowers were being placed upon the graves in the little cemetery, they wanted Alvin to talk to them. He and Gracie were seated in the empty bed of an unhitched wagon down at the edge of the grove of forest trees that surrounds the church. He came to the cemetery, and his talk was the untrammelled outpouring of his heart for all that had been done for him. The spirit of the day, with his own people around him, his experiences and the changes that had come into his life since the last decoration services he had attended there, seemed to

move him deeply, and here was first displayed a power of oratory which he was so rapidly to develop.

The people of Tennessee began to gather gifts for him before he left France, and the Tennessee Society of New York City entertained him when he left his troop-ship. The people of the South had always remembered with added reverence that Robert E. Lee had declined to commercialize his military fame, while some of the other generals of the Confederacy had sacrificed their reputations upon the altar of expediency. So when it became known that Sergeant York, with no knowledge of history to guide him, but acting from principle, had refused to capitalize the record of the few brief months he had spent in the service of his country, there was nothing within the gift of the people he could not have had.

His welcome home by the State of Ten-

nessee was to be held at the capital on June 9th. But Sergeant York, before he went to war, had given an option—one over which he was showing deep concern. His mountain sweetheart was to "have him for the taking when he got back." So it was mutually—amicably—arranged that the foreclosure proceedings should take place in Pall Mall on June 7th, and their bridal tour would be to Nashville.

It was an out-of-door wedding so that all of the guests in Pall Mall for that day could be present, and they came not only from all parts of Tennessee but from neighboring States. The altar was the rock ledge on the mountainside, above the spring, under the beech trees that arched their boughs into a verdant cathedral dome. It had been their meeting-place when he was an unknown mountain boy and she a golden-haired school-girl. As the sunlight flickered on the

trunks of those trees it showed scars of knife carvings that carried the dates of other meetings there.

The swaying boughs were draped with flags and flowers. The ceremony was performed by Governor Roberts of Tennessee, assisted by Rev. Rosier Pile, the pastor of the church in the valley, and Rev. W. T. Haggard, chaplain-general of the Governor's staff. The bridesmaids were Miss Ida Wright, Miss Maud Brier and Miss Adelia Darwin, and Sergeant York's best man was Sergeant Clay Brier, of Jamestown. Their friendship had been proved upon the fields of France. The wedding march was the wind among the laurels and the pines.

The "Welcome Home" for him, at Nashville, by the people of Tennessee, will long be remembered among the public demonstrations of the State. Tennessee has always been proud of the fact that the conduct of

her sons in those times when the nation went to war had entitled her to the name of "The Volunteer State." That one of her sons should come back from the World War, having done, in the sum of its accomplishment, that which the Commander of the Armies of the Allies called the greatest feat of valor, while fighting solely on his own resources, of any soldier of all of the armies of Europe, made the welcome one that sprang joyously from the hearts of the people. And that this soldier, while poor and still facing the possibility of a life filled with the deprivation of poverty, with no assurance but the continued labor of his hands, should turn down the offers of fortunes because, to him, they were prompted by a motive that was unworthy—opened the very inner sanctuary of their hearts and the people came with gifts, that he should sustain no loss of opportunity and should never be in need. The

offerings were not in money. They were presents from the people. There were fertile acres that he could till, as that was his selection of the life he wished to follow. There was a model, modern house in which he could live, and furnishings for it. There were blooded fowls and stock and farming implements, down to the files for his scythe. The donors were individuals, organizations and communities. Waiting for him was the state's medal which bears the device "Service Above Self." He was appointed a member of the Governor's staff and upon him was conferred the rank of Colonel. This was the wedding trip of Sergeant York and his bride.

To Nashville, in the bridal party, to see and hear the honors to be paid her son went Mrs. York, the mother. It was the first time she had ever seen a railroad-train. And, now, it was Mrs. York's turn. She, too,

faced a battalion. Wearing her calico sunbonnet she came suddenly upon the gorgeous social battalion—so fully equipped with the bayonets of class and the machine guns of curiosity. And she captured it! As her son had never seen the man or crowd of men of whom he was afraid, she, with her philosophy of life, looked upon every one as worthy of friendship and the meeting with them a pleasure and not an occasion for disconcertment. If they approached her with a greeting of wit, her answer was quick and gentle, and as playful as a mountain stream. If their mood was serious, she immediately impressed them with her frankness and her common sense. She went everywhere the program provided, and enjoyed every moment of it. As she was preparing to return home her appreciation was expressed in her declaration that she "intended to come again, when she could go quietly about and really

see things—when policemen would not have to make way for her."

Alvin was beginning life anew, decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross and the rare Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award of his country to a soldier; the Medaille Militaire and the Croix de Guerre with Palm, of France; the Croca di Guerra, of Italy; the War Medal of Montenegro; the Legion of Honor; medals for gallantry from Tennessee and the Methodist Centenary, and the Commonwealth of Rhode Island was beckoning to him, to decorate him with the medal the State's legislature had voted. There were the gifts the people of Tennessee had given him, and others that began to come from all sections of the Union. The mountaineers of the State of Georgia clubbed together and sent a remembrance—and presents came from the far West.

Several cities offered him a home if he would come to live among their people. Communities, wanting him, selected their most desirable farming sites and tendered them. But the "Valley of the Three Forks o' the Wolf" was home to him, and while in France he had said he wished to live "nowhere but at Pall Mall." So the Rotary Clubs, headed by the Nashville organization, raised the fund for the "York Home" through public subscription, and there has been given to him four hundred acres of the "bottom land" of the Valley of the Wolf and one of the timbered mountainsides—land that had been homesteaded and first brought into cultivation by "Old Coonrod" Pile, his pioneer ancestor—land that had remained in the possession of his family until lost in the vicissitudes of the days following the Civil War.

As his residence on his new farm was yet

to be built for him, he carried his bride back to the valley and to the little two-room cabin that had been his mother's and his home.

It was impossible for Sergeant York to accept all of the invitations he received to visit cities and address conventions, and he had often to disappoint delegations who traveled the long, rough mountain road to urge in person his acceptance. And he could not, with a slow-moving pen upon a table of pine, answer all the communications that came. Before the war two letters for him in half a year was an occasion worthy of comment. Now each day, over the mountains upon a pacing roan, the postman came, and the mail-pouches, swung as saddle-bags, swayed in unison with the horse's step. Most of the letters were for the York home.

The public mind pays tribute to its heroes in ways that are odd. In the growing mass of mail that was kept in a wide wooden box

under the bed—letters that in number "had got away" from the Sergeant's ability to answer—there were displayed many mental idiosyncrasies and an abundance of advice, and there were many strange requests. Some of them were pathetic begging letters, as tho the Sergeant were a rich man; some came from prison-cells, asking his influence to secure a pardon; some from those still desirous of securing a business partnership with him. Among them were even belated matrimonial proposals, describing the writers' attractive qualities. These the big Sergeant teasingly turned over to the golden-haired girl who, herself, had come but recently into that home, and they may safely be classed among those letters the Sergeant could never answer.

While he was at home, which was now only for brief intervals between trips in answer to the invitations he had accepted, it

was noted that he was unusually quiet. Often he would sit for an hour or more upon the door-step, looking out past the arbor of honeysuckle, over the acres of land that had been given him, gazing on to the mountains. But he kept his own counsel. Some of those who lived in the valley, who saw him sitting, thinking, wondered if there had come a longing into Alvin's heart to be out in the world again.

But his problem was far from that. He had asked himself two questions: "What was the great need of the people who live far back in the mountains?" "What—since the world had been so generous to him, and lifted from his shoulders the trials of living —could he do for his people?" He was trying to answer them. Subconsciously, a great and a genuine appreciation of all that had been done for him was pushing him onward.

Unaided, he had solved the first. It was

education. How keenly, within the few months that had passed, had he realized his own need!

But at that time he did not appreciate how rapidly he was building for himself a bridge over that shortcoming.

The second problem he found more difficult. He recognized he could do a greater good and his efforts would be more lasting and far-reaching if he proved to be an aid to the younger generation. In his effort to reach a practical plan he went as far as he could, with his limited knowledge of organization, before he sought counsel.

Then he asked that no other gifts be made to him, but instead the money be contributed to a fund to build simple, primary schools throughout the mountain districts where there were no state or county tax appropriations available for the purpose. Of the fund, not a dollar was to be for his personal use,

nor for any effort he might put forth in its behalf.

So again the form of Sergeant York rose out of the valley, above the mountains, and the sunlight of the nation's approval fell upon it. Men of prominence volunteered to aid him in his efforts for the children of the mountains, and the result was the incorporation of the York Foundation, a non-profit-sharing organization, that is to build schoolhouses and operate schools. Among the trustees are an ex-Secretary of the United States Treasury, bishops of the churches, a state governor, a congressman, bankers, lawyers and business men.* The fund is already a

* The Trustees of the York Foundation are: Bishop James Atkins, Methodist Episcopal Church, South; W. B. Beauchamp, Director-General of the Methodist Centenary, Nashville, Tenn.; George E. Bennie, President, Alexander Bennie Co., Nashville, Tenn.; C. H. Brandon, President, Brandon Printing Co., Nashville, Tenn.; P. H. Cain, Cain-Sloan Co., Nashville, Tenn.; Joel O. Cheek, President, Cheek-Neal Coffee Co., Nashville, Tenn.; James N. Cox, Gainesboro Telephone Co., Cookeville, Tenn.; Dr. G. W. Dyer, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.; Judge F. T. Fancher, Sparta, Tenn.; Edgar M. Foster, Business Manager, "Nashville Banner," Nashville, Tenn.; Judge Joseph Garden-

substantial one, steadily growing, and success is assured.

In connection with each school is to be land to be tilled by the students as a farm, and besides providing instruction in agriculture, the farm is to aid in the support of the school, and no child of the community is to miss the opportunity to attend through inability to pay the tuition charge. As each unit becomes self-supporting, another school is to be established in a new district.

hire, Carthage, Tenn.; T. Graham Hall, Business Man, Nashville, Tenn.; Hon. Cordell Hull, Chairman of Democratic National Committee and former Congressman from York's district; Lee J. Loventhal, Business Man, Nashville, Tenn.; Hon. William G. McAdoo, former secretary of the United States Treasury, New York City; Hon. Hill McAllister, State Treasurer, Nashville, Tenn.; J. S. McHenry, Vice-President, Fourth & First National Bank, Nashville, Tenn.; Dr. Bruce R. Payne, President, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn.; Rev. R. C. Pile, Pall Mall, Tenn.; T. R. Preston, President, Hamilton National Bank, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Hon. A. H. Roberts, former Governor of Tennessee, Nashville, Tenn.; Bolton Smith, Lawyer, Memphis, Tenn.; Judge C. E. Snodgrass, Crossville, Tenn.; Dr. James I. Vance, First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tenn.; Hon. George N. Welch, former State Commissioner of Public Utilities, Nashville, Tenn.; F. A. Williams, Farmer, Pall Mall, Tenn.; S. R Williams, Farmer, Pall Mall, Tenn.; W. L. Wright, President, Bank of Jamestown, Pall Mall, Tenn., and Sergeant Alvin C. York.

In this new endeavor, Alvin wished to do what he could to shield the boys now at play among the red brush upon the mountain-sides from being compelled to say, after they had grown to young manhood, what he himself had been forced to confess: "I'm just an ignorant mountain boy."

And he is making rapid strides of progress for himself. I saw him enter the great banquet room of a leading hotel in one of the country's largest cities. The hall was filled with men and women of refinement and culture. As Sergeant York and his young wife entered, the banqueters arose and cheered them. This demonstration was a welcome to "Sergeant York, the soldier."

He paused, with a smile of appreciation as he looked over the vast assemblage, and he bowed with a grace and dignity far beyond that which was expected of him from what his audience had read and heard. Then with-

out turning his head, he reached for the hand of his bride and led her to the speakers' table upon a raised platform. And he was again to bring that assemblage to its feet and fill that hall with its cheers. This time it was for Alvin York, the man—as he talked to them about the boys of the mountains.

Three days afterward, he entered the store of John Marion Rains at Pall Mall. As all the chairs and kegs of horseshoes were occupied, he put his hands behind him, swung himself to a place of comfort upon the counter, and took his part in the battle of wit as the firing flashed amid the tobacco smoke. Pall Mall was home, and there he permitted no distinction between individuals.

This has wandered far afield as a biography of Sergeant York. It is but a story of the strength and the simplicity of a man—a young man—whom the nation has honored

for what he has done, with something in it of those who went before and left him as a legacy the qualities of mind and heart that enabled him to fight his fight in the Forest of Argonne. The biography no doubt will be written later. He has not planned for the long years that lie ahead, but is following after a principle with a force that can not be deflected or checked. The future alone will tell where this is to lead him. This is really a story of but two years of his life—the period of time that has elapsed since Alvin York first found himself—a period in which he has done three things, and any one of them would have marked him for distinction. He fought a great fight, declined to barter the honors that came to him, and using his new-found strength he has reached a helping hand to the children of the mountains who needed him.

PALMAM QUI MERUIT FERAT!